THE FLIGHT OF THE SILVER SHIP

HUGH McALISTER

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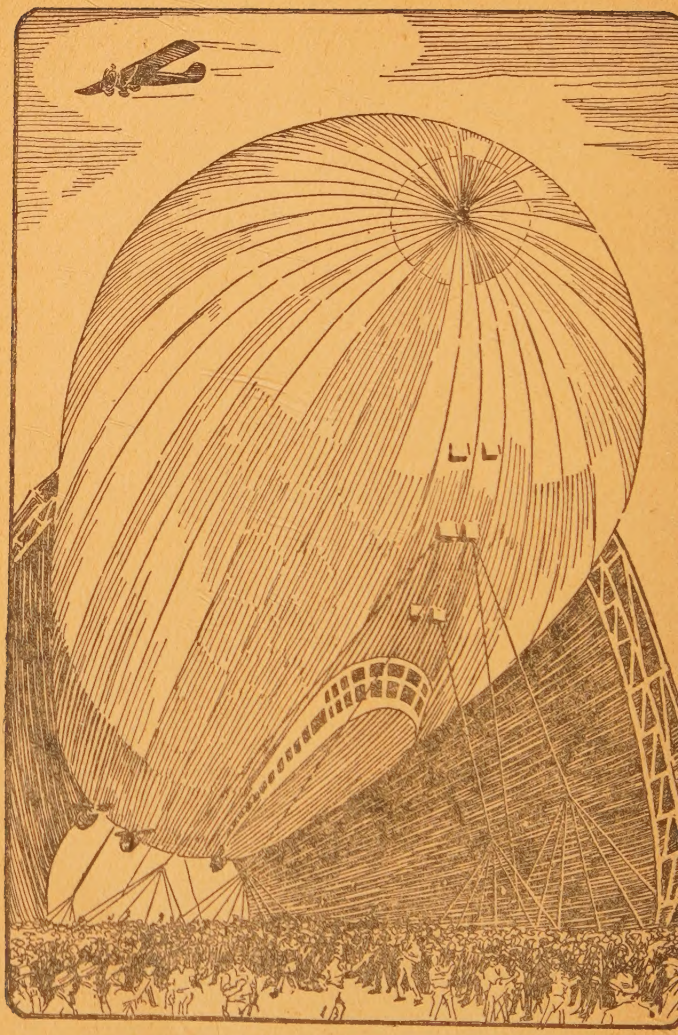
The Flight of the Silver Ship



Twenty thousand spectators let out a mighty roa
as the ground crew walked the Moonbeam
out of the hangar.

THE FLIGHT OF THE SILVER SHIP

Around the World Aboard a Giant Dirigible

by

HUGH MCALISTER

Author of

"A VIKING OF THE SKY," "FLAMING RIVER"
"STEVE HOLWORTH OF THE OLDHAM WORKS"
"CONQUEROR OF THE HIGHROAD"
"STAND BY"

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The Flight of the Silver Ship

CHAPTER I

DAVID CHOOSES

David Ellison would never forget his last night at prep school. He had had a hard time explaining to his three best friends that his plans for college had failed. Lolling on the grass in the pleasant June dusk, enjoying the comfortable relaxation after the hectic hours of Commencement Day, he had put off the evil moment as long as he possibly could. Finally he exploded his bomb.

"Well, fellows," he said, "I am not going to college after all."

There was a silence. Three pairs of eyes regarded the speaker blankly.

"The heat," said a tall boy in a hushed tone, laying a hand on David's unruly hair.

"It's that little girl he danced with four times yesterday at the tea," a second remarked mournfully.

"It's because he leads the Honor Roll. He thinks he knows it all now," jeered the third;

then, "Kidding aside, Davie," he said, "what's up?"

David hesitated, then took the plunge.

"Darn it!" he said. "Of course I owe it to you three fellows to give you all the dope, but I certainly hate to drag my affairs in. Still, after all our planning I can't leave you without an explanation. You know I live in Denver with my mother and two sisters. Boys, I've got the finest mother, and the sweetest kid sisters. Mother works. She never gets a vacation; couldn't even come to my Commencement. Gosh! It made me sick. And my older sister (she's sixteen) has heard me tell all about you fellows, and she was so crazy to see you, and the school, and everything. But they couldn't make it. Too much car fare."

"Why, you big stiff!" cried the tall boy angrily. "Why didn't you say something? Mother and father came right through Denver. All your folks could have come on with them in the car."

"Yes," said David, "I know, and I certainly appreciate it, but they couldn't very well—"

"But what about college, Dave?" asked the tall boy impatiently.

"I'll have to start away back," said David. "My father was an army officer—a captain in

the Air Corps. He went through the war without a scratch until the day before the Armistice. There was a big raid, and—well, dad crashed. Shot down. He had nothing but his pay, and only ten thousand dollars war risk insurance. We were in Washington when it happened. Mother took us back to Denver, where she had some relatives, and invested the insurance money in a little business. She has a shop where she sells things for women—a Specialty Shop, they call it. She makes enough to keep herself and the girls and give me just a little help once in a while. I don't know when I haven't worked at something to help pay my way and, as you know, I've been lucky enough to meet all my own expenses here."

David chuckled as his memory took him back over the past four years. What hadn't he tackled! Band man, coach, bookkeeper, tutor, telephone operator, handy man around the house—anything and everything. He had made his tuition and clothes, and hadn't cost his mother a cent. Of course, he had worked summers too, but he had always found a job near home so he could be near the family.

"Now as you know," he continued, "I was all set for college, with jobs enough cinched to get me through all right, especially as I was to

share your quarters, but I have just found out that the girls have given up their plans for college, so that I can go! I had a letter from my little sister, and she spilled the beans. Poor kid, she didn't know it! I'm going to work; going to earn real money. There's a wholesale grocer in Denver who will give me a job, I think."

"But the big balloons, David; what about them?"

"They will have to fly without yours truly. Gosh! Well, I can always read about 'em; that will be some comfort. And it takes quite a knack to count bags of sugar." He smiled wryly.

"Well, we are all darned sorry," said the tall boy. "Guess you know that, Dave, without our blubbering."

David got up.

"Yes, I know it. But I've got to face hard facts. Don't think I'm squealing. Honest, I'm glad to do it, even if it is disappointing." He squared his shoulders. "Well," he said reluctantly, "I'd better go by-by now; my train leaves at six-thirty. I'll stick my head in your rooms on my way off. So long!"

An hour later, sitting by his open window, David listened to the strains of the band over in the gymnasium and watched the stars.

He had the feeling that he was swinging in a void. Every task and duty connected with the school was finished. He had just jumped on his trunk and locked it. It was ready to be dragged out into the hall for the expressman to take at dawn. Another boy was filling his place in the band. Football, basketball, tennis —they were all dreams, never to touch reality again, even when he should look at the team photographs cherished between stiff cardboards in his trunk.

A small apologetic rap sounded on his door. No one ever knocked in the natural course of events. Surprised, David opened it, snapping on the light as he did so. The three boys stood there, leaning heavily on one another's shoulders.

"Hello!" said the foremost. "'Fraid you would be in bed."

"No, just picking up loose ends," said David. "Glad you happened along. Take an end of this trunk, will you, and let's heave it into the hall."

"What's in it, bricks?" asked one, as they placed the trunk in the corridor. They came in, and shut the door.

"I suppose you want to go to bed," said the tall boy, "but we have a plan to put up to you, and we were afraid that there would be so

much confusion in the morning that you might not see it straight. And I'm doing the talking now, so you'll kindly shut up until I am all through. And be reasonable! Fact is, old man, we want you to borrow the cost of your college course from us. Now wait!" he demanded, as David shook his head. "Try to listen, you blithering idiot! We all have plenty of money, and we want to stake you; just as if you were our own brother, Dave. Listen! It's like this: take the money, and keep the jobs you have planned on. They will float you, and you can send the cash home, and the girls can go to college, and everything will be jake. See?"

"I can't take it," said David, touched and amused at the same time. "If that is what brought you, just save your breath. You are the best friends a fellow ever had, and it is worth giving up more than I have given up to find it out. But I don't want your money. I can't take anybody's money. I haven't a cent of my own beside my car fare and ten dollars for meals, and I am going to start square with myself and the whole world.

"Get this, fellows; I am just as grateful as I can be, and I'll never forget it. But I'm not going to be carried along by my friends. I won't be a sap, or a sucker, or a leech. I'll

work my own way up, and boy! just watch my dust!" He shook each one by the hand and somehow, before they knew it, they were in the hall.

Davie, ready for bed, tired with their kindly insistence, wondered if they would come in the night, and pin large checks on his pajama coat!

"Well, I won't borrow, and I won't sponge on my mother," David declared grimly to himself. "I'll show what I can do. I won't be carried along. I'll arrive somewhere, some day, on my own two feet, and not on the shoulders of somebody else. I'll make those fellows darned proud of me yet!"

Outside David's door lay his boyhood, his flaming hopes, his fondest memories. All his life he had meant to be an aviator. He had thought of it, studied for it, and concentrated on it; but his skies were empty now. No majestic forms floated grandly across his horizon. Vanished were the dream-ships which he had meant to make real. Gone were his shining hopes, his resolves to follow in his father's footsteps. Not for him, in future days, to build ships such as the world had never seen. He determined to destroy all the careful plans and experiments he had so neatly drawn. In the bottom of his trunk

were a score of technical books on dirigibles, past and present, bought at long intervals with hard-earned money. For it was the dirigible toward which David's heart yearned. The great majestic balloons held a charm for him that the busy, flitting airplanes were powerless to wield. But he knew that he had made the right decision; and knowing it, slept well.

Reaching home, it took much argument on David's part before his adoring family was resigned to his change of plans; but he was all the more determined when he saw how worn his mother's still lovely face had grown.

His friend the wholesale grocer was away. However, the manager said that he would be back in a few days and assured David that a good job was waiting for him. On the long, tedious trolley ride home, David had time to think. At school, he could always hop some fellow's car. Easy and pleasant. He'd never given it a thought, but that was sponging in a way. Well, never again; never! He made a wry face at a cat on a gatepost. Lord! he was slated to be poor—filthy poor, for many a long year. It couldn't be too many years, though.

He must make money. His mother didn't look right. Of course, the wholesale groceries might give him a good break. Lots of fellows

had begun at the very bottom and had soared up.

Soared—that brought his mind to the ships again. It would always be like that, he knew. He'd go along, almost contented, working like the devil and getting on in groceries, but underneath he'd always be thinking about the ships, the roar of the engines, the feel of the rushing air. And he couldn't do that—not if he meant to make a good grocer. A good grocer! Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord! Something would have to be done!

By the time he reached home the pendulum had swung again. He couldn't give up his ships. Why, he was kin to every dirigible, every balloon, every little fat blimp that adventured into the upper tides! He couldn't give them up. As well ask a sailor to go inland and hoe turnips. As well ask a violinist to drive rivets for a living. Well, he'd hoe turnips, drive rivets; hoe fast and drive hard. He was no shirk.

Quite simply and trustingly, David turned to that Great Source upon whom strong hearts are not ashamed to call. "Help me to find a way!" he whispered.

After dinner, while turning the pages of a magazine David chanced on an article on dirigibles. He commenced to read it. Parts

of it he reread, scarcely believing his eyes. He gave a whoop of delight.

"The very thing!" he cried. "Mother, listen to this!"

"What is it?" cried Mrs. Ellison and his older sister Lydia.

"Something big! Just listen!" David's face glowed with excitement. "Today I went over to Black & Black's to see about a job. They will take me on at fifteen bucks a week, and a chance for a raise occasionally. But they wouldn't sign me on today because the Mr. Black who attends to such things is away, thank goodness!"

"Why 'thank goodness'?" said Lydia.

"This magazine says Goodlow & Company, at Ayre, Ohio, have expanded into the largest dirigible works in the world; and owing to the necessity of having expert pilots and mechanics, they are about to open a school for novices. It is a four-year course, in four departments. First year, ground work; second year, construction and development; third year, balloon fabrics and gases; and fourth year, intensive piloting.

"Some rich guy has already posted a big prize to be competed for by the students, for the best invention that will add to the safety of dirigible navigation. And there is a prize

in each department given at the close of each year, for the student who has done the best work. They will accept only a limited number of students, and what do you know about this? They pay 'em real money, with bigger salaries, of course, as they go along."

"Why, they couldn't afford to do that, could they, David?" inquired his mother.

"Yes, because the students are at first really laborers and then mechanics in a small way—apprentices to the real big fellows until they acquire skill themselves. Mother, if I can make it, it will fix everything. The students have their quarters at the plant; dormitories, I suppose. It is rather like being in the army. Pretty stiff discipline, and all that. There won't be any expenses to speak of, and I can send home almost every cent they give me."

"But flying, Davie!" said Mrs. Ellison, her beautiful soft eyes filled with tears. "Flying! I have hoped so that you wouldn't fly."

"Mother darling," said David gently, "I know how you must feel, but this is not war time. It is peace that needs the dirigible. It is the greatest invention; the greatest—Oh, I am crazy about it! Father would tell me to go on, wouldn't he, mother?"

"Yes, he would indeed," Mrs. Ellison said proudly, with a tremulous smile.

"When do you have to start, Davie?" asked his younger sister, Patty.

"Patty seems to have decided it," laughed Mrs. Ellison.

"The examinations for enrollment are only four days from today," said David ruefully.

"At Ayre, Ohio!" cried Lydia. "My goodness! Dave, you will have to start tonight. And what will you start on? Has anybody got any money?"

"I have the Liberty Bond father bought me," said David.

Mrs. Ellison's eyes filled, but Lydia jumped up and danced around the room.

"The very thing!" she cried. "Oh, that's wonderful! Father would so love to stake you in this. Come on, mother, get out his bond, and while you and David go out and get somebody to cash it, I will pack his things, and see to reservations."

She looked at her mother, and sensed something wrong.

"You approve, don't you, mother? You will let him fly? We will be so proud of him. Why, this is better than a dozen colleges."

"A school for apprentices," mused Mrs. Ellison. "That really means greater safety for future ships, doesn't it? It is a wonderful thing."

"It is not a new idea," said David. "They opened one in Friedrichshafen, Germany, during the war. It has been a great success. Friedrichshafen is the cradle of the dirigible. We have army and navy schools here in this country, but this school is to fit civilians for commercial flying, and is run on what you might call a co-operative basis. I wondered if we would ever wake up over here to the necessity of schools like that. And now—well, I bet in three or four years there will be a dozen schools scattered all over the United States."

"Dave, it's just great!" cried Lydia.

David looked anxiously toward his mother.

"Well, what's the good word, mother? Do I go?"

For a long moment Mrs. Ellison seemed lost in thought. This boy was her only son. How much safer it would be to "measure coffee, and count sugar sacks." Her only son; but he was his father's son as well! Brave, intrepid Rick Ellison had a share in this boy. So she spoke for them both, and smiled.

"Go, of course, David," she said.

CHAPTER II

LORD CRAM

David found the trip to Ayre tedious; the hours dragged interminably. His first night was sleepless, and he went into the dining-car for breakfast rather late. He slipped into an empty seat at one of the small tables for two. He found himself seated across from a thin, dark young man a little older than himself. His pleasant good-morning was returned by a mumbled greeting as the stranger glanced up, then hurriedly transferred his attention to his food. He ate importantly, seeming to put a vast amount of ceremony into the homely order of bacon and eggs before him.

David ordered breakfast, and commenced to study his time-table. When he laid it down, the stranger leaned across and remarked, "I meant to get a time-table and forgot it. May I see yours?"

David handed it over with a pleasant word. The stranger, swaying to the motion of the

fast train, opened the folder. David had marked stops and changes, and had drawn a black line around Ayre. The chap looked up, and caught David's eye.

"Ayre your destination?" he asked, and at David's nod he continued, "That's where I am going, too. My name is Cram—Walter Cram."

"My name is Ellison," said David, "Glad to meet you."

"Ellison," said Walter Cram. "Not a very —well, I don't know any Ellison, myself. Never heard the name but once. I've got a book, "Great Pilots of the World War." There is a pilot in that book named Ellison. A great chap; absolutely fearless; did the most amazing things. His career reads like a fairy story. You ought to get that book and read about him. It would interest you on account of the coincidence of the name."

"I expect it would," said David.

Cram, once started, chatted on. He ran an appraising eye over David's neat but not new suit, his correct but worn hat, his well-kept but muscular hands. He pulled out a watch, white gold, thin and racy-looking in its general correctness.

"What time you got?" he asked.

David, with a smile, obligingly bit. He hauled out a large fat silver timepiece on the

turnip order, and gravely offered its moon face for Cram's inspection.

"Heirloom?" asked Cram compassionately.

"My grandfather's," replied David.

"How the old fellows loved those turnips!" said Cram. "I had an old hick of a grandfather, a farmer out in the sticks. He had one of those, and we couldn't make him give it up. Same with yours, I suppose."

"No, he wouldn't give it up," said David. "Used it all his life, then gave it to me." What use to tell Cram how that watch had been carried by its intrepid owner into Africa, and through the jungles of South America? It had lived in China, had skirted the steppes of Russia, had been shipwrecked, and shot at. The dent on its fat back was the mark of a poisoned arrow in Australia. No, his grandfather had never given it up until, called at last to explore a far more distant and unknown country, his dying hand had pressed it into the baby grasp of his grandson.

"Sentiment is a blamed poor thing," Cram declared; then, as if he had been too friendly, he rose abruptly, nodded and with a brief "See you later," went off, carrying the newspaper, and David's time-table as well.

With a sigh of relief, David tackled his bacon and eggs, and a second man slid into the

vacant seat. He looked directly at David with a pair of keen blue eyes, around which curled thick fair lashes. His shock of reddish-gold hair had been struggled with, but not subdued. His wide grin disclosed dazzling white teeth, whiter by contrast with the deep sunburn of his skin.

"Mind if I sit here, Buddy?" he asked cheerily.

"Not a bit," said David, smiling in return.

"Name's Ryan," said the blond husky. "Kenneth Ryan."

"I'm David Ellison," said David, warming at once to the honest face and clear gaze.

"Glad to meet you," said Ryan, extending his hard and muscular hand. He studied the menu card anxiously. "These here mennoos!" he groaned. "What makes 'em have so many things to pick from? When I'm home I eat at delicatessens, or Childs'; but this! Damfino what to choose!"

"I had oatmeal, and bacon and eggs, and cakes," said David helpfully.

"Bully!" said Ryan. He looked up at the waiter. "The same," he said, waving a comprehensive hand toward David's place. Then he settled his elbows on the table.

"I seen you talking to Lord Cram," he chuckled.

"For a few minutes," said David. "You know him?"

"Yeah, but he doesn't know me, now. I used to go to school with him when we were kids at St. Mary's school in Lawton, Oklahoma. His folks couldn't send him to public school on account of the Mex and Indians fightin' him so because of the way he yelled. Beat any Indian war cry you ever heard. Then his grandfather struck oil on his worthless farm, and, lordymighty, the Crams just soared! No, he don't know me. I'm just a mechanic. How far are you going, if you don't mind me asking?"

"Ayre, Ohio," said David.

"Ayre!" said Ryan. "Why, that's where Cram is bound. That's funny! By golly, I bet you are both set to try that examination at the Goodlow Plant."

"I am, at any rate," said David. "I don't know about Cram. He didn't put out any information."

"Afraid you might cramp his style. That's him all over. You might jump off the train ahead of him, and get the first taxi, and reach the plant first, and grab off a job as vice president."

"Are you going there, too?" asked David.

"Yes, I am, as it happens, but not for that

apprentice course, worse luck. I haven't enough education. I want to land a job as mechanic. I just can't keep away from the flying machines, Ellison, and," he added, thrusting out a stubborn jaw, "if I get a chance down at Goodlow's, I'll bet my bottom dollar that I will make a swell mechanic. I've nothing at all above the collar," he grinned, "but I own a damn good pair of hands."

"You will do," laughed David. "Here's hoping we both get in. We'll see something of each other if we do. I've got to write a note to my mother; see you later."

"Sure, sure!" said Ryan, beaming. "I camp in the smoker. So long!"

He watched David leave the car.

"Well, Red, we like that bozo, don't we?" he told himself. "True blue, if I can read a man, and a gentleman born. As my mother says, the mark of character shows on a man, no matter how many overcoats he wears."

Later, in the club car, David found Cram reading a magazine. He walked up to him.

"You forgot to return my time-table, I think," he said.

"Time-table? Oh, yes, here it is. I did take it, didn't I? Sorry, and thanks."

"That's all right," said David, turning.

"Wait!" Cram exclaimed. "Sit down. I'd

like to talk to you. I am wondering if you are going to Ayre."

"I think it is marked on my time-table," returned David.

"I noticed it. It doesn't happen that you are going down for the examinations at Goodlow's, does it?"

"On account of my name being the same as an aviator?" laughed David. "As a matter of fact, I am going for the exams."

Cram shook his head. "That's almost too bad," he said. "You've come a long way, but I'm afraid you won't have the ghost of a chance, unless you brought a lot of credentials, letters from your teachers, and congressmen, and senators, and so on. No? Well, they tell me it is going to take a lot of pull to get in, a darned lot of pull. You see, these people want to interest influence and money, and they are going to give first chance to the applicants who can do 'em the most good that way."

"That's too bad," said David, without showing any particular anxiety. "I can't show a letter from a single senator. I had an idea that this was strictly a personal merit proposition."

"Personal merit hasn't a show these days, my boy."

"What pull have you got?" asked David.

Cram put a hand on David's knee.

"Boy, I have a suitcase stuffed full of credentials. I have enough to paper a room! No need to worry over my chances."

"That's fine," said David heartily. "I will have to depend on school reports, and such things."

He nodded, and walked away. He was depressed in spite of himself. The cocksure arrogance of Cram was funny, yet it stuck in David's mind. He was glad to wander into the smoker and talk to Ryan, who greeted him joyfully. He repeated his conversation with Cram.

"Aw, he makes me sick!" scoffed Ryan. "He may make the grade, at that, though. He got to be quite a shark at his books, and he's had a small plane, so he can talk smooth and easy. Yeah, he may pass. Lots of ways he's not so bad. My brother Mike likes him."

"You have a brother?" asked David.

"Six," said Ryan. "Have you any?"

"Six? Gosh! No; I have two sisters."

"Only two? I have five. That's quite a houseful to bring up and dress and feed, even in Oklahoma. No wonder we boys worked. But it did us good, at that. I don't begrudge any of it, except I was sorry that I

never could get the hang of my lessons. Some of us is smart, though. My oldest brother was a chaplain in the army through the war. I wanted to enlist last year, and told him so; and he said, 'Red Ryan, you no-account, if you go enlistin' in the army for thirty a month and found, I'll find ye and I'll not leave one strip of skin on your back, and the Pope and me will excommunicate you beside.' He's a murderin' cuss. I'm not one to butt into your affairs, Mr. Ellison, but don't you give Wally one worrisome thought. You'll pass. I like your straight-looking eyes, and so will they."

David laughed. "Why, you fuss me, Ryan," he said, "but I am going to get in. I have got to pass; and if I fail this time, I'll get work with you, and study nights, and try for the next class."

"That's the stuff, me lad!" cried the redhead. "Not climbing up on nobody's shoulders. And Red Ryan's the lad that's going to stand by and hurray when you've got where you're goin'."

But five days later, at the Goodlow Plant in Ayre, David did pass. As anticipated, there was a mob of applicants. Scores of them, who saw in flying an easy way of escaping the grind of ordinary toil. These soon faded out of the picture, when they found out a little of

the requirements and routine of the strenuous years ahead, and left a few real enthusiasts, boys who realized that aviation is humanity's dream come true.

How can we guess what hours the cave man spent, after a kill and its resultant feast, lying on some mossy bank, watching the swift and glorious flight of great birds, and longing to be as they? Then, ages passing, the vision persisted with the winged beasts of the Apocalypse; the flying steeds of Zeus; Pegasus, beautiful and free, winging his glorious way toward the dawn, outracing the Flying Carpet; eager young Icarus, his wings of wax melting in the sun. Ever aspiring, the dreamers passed, laughing at Darius Green as he tumbled, and watching with bated breath as the first hot-air balloons lumbered clumsily into the air! An age-old dream that has never grown less alluring, never less lovely, but depends at last on man's own knowledge and desperate endeavor.

So, in the big austere room, where the Board of Judges met, the stream of applicants slowly divided, one part to be absorbed again into the arteries of the cities, the other part to face the final questions and scrutiny of men well able to judge men's capabilities, and read their secret ambitions.

They were questioned in small groups; and David, when dismissed with a number of others with the welcome assurance that they would be enrolled as student apprentices, was unaware of the good impression he had made on the examining board. As he was about to leave the room, someone at his elbow called his name. A tall gray-haired man stood beside him.

"Are you Rick Ellison's son?"

"Why, yes, sir," said David.

"I am Colonel Porter. I am very proud to have known your father. He was an ace of aces. His death, coming at that last moment of the war, was doubly a tragedy and a great loss to the air service. You have something to live up to, young man."

"I am proud, Colonel, but if you don't mind —well, sir, would you mind doing me a favor?"

"Name it, son!" said the Colonel. "Doing a favor for Rick Ellison's boy would seem like doing something for him; and God knows anyone who knew him would jump at that chance."

"It is only this," said David. "If you don't mind, I'd rather not have it known here about father. He is too big for me. I want to see if I can't make good without leaning on his record. If it leaks out now that I am Captain

Ellison's son, lots of 'em will watch me and perhaps be kinder to me than I deserve.

"Don't you see, sir, it is sort of like the ginks in old times, who used to go out to kill dragons and rescue fair ladies carrying plain shields, so nobody would know that their fathers were kings, until they had proved that they were pretty hot themselves."

"Absolutely; you are right!" said the Colonel. "I will not tell, but don't forget that I am David Ellison's friend, for his own sake as well as for the sake of his father." He shook David's hand and as the boy went out muttered to himself, "Damned if that kid hasn't killed his first dragon, already; the dragon of dependence!"

Once outside, David sprinted for a telegraph office, and the glorious news of his success ticked gaily off to his mother. Then taking his suitcase, he returned to the Goodlow Plant, and at the barracks was assigned his quarters.

On his way to find Ryan he saw Cram sitting outside the General Offices, where the Board was working.

"What's the glad news, Cram?" he cried.

Cram looked up.

"Well, there's some hitch," he said. "I guess they don't know just which class to put me in.

They told me to wait until afternoon. I thought I might as well stay right here."

"Did they read all your dope?" asked David.

"They have it in there," said Cram. "I'll bet it knocks 'em cold. I told 'em all I could, but it was such a scramble. I don't believe I touched on the oil. Ready money, Ellison. A few family gushers to put into improvements and all that. Yes, I ought to have mentioned the oil."

"Well, I bet the oil will leak out sooner or later," said David. "Good luck!" He went on.

Two hours later as David skirted the big landing field, he saw Cram, suitcase in hand, hurrying toward the taxi stand. David shouted, but he did not appear to hear. Breaking into a run, David overtook him.

"What's the decision?" he enquired.

Cram's face was livid; his lips twitched.

"Ellison, they turned me down!" he announced. "Said I wasn't scholastically and technically qualified. Politics in it somehow, of course. Or some personal grudge." He swore roundly.

"Why, that's too bad!" said David. The other's bitter disappointment roused a feeling of friendship that surprised him.

"I'll get even somehow," said the other. "Why, all I wanted was to make a name for

myself in something beside oil." His eyes filled.

"Well, that's all right. You study, and come back next year, and try again. If you want any help or suggestions, write me. I'll do what I can."

Cram did not reply at once. He smoothed his ruffled hair with a hand that shook.

"I guess I'm like our Indians. Some grudges I never forget."

"Be a good Indian then, Cram, and don't tomahawk anybody until you know just what's what."

Cram sneered, and with a glare over David's shoulder walked hastily away. David turned to see the cause of the venomous look. It was Red Ryan, whistling lustily.

"Red, they kicked him out," said David.

"Not Cram!"

"Yep, and gosh, he is sore! Wants to kill someone. Wants to be a bad Indian, in fact."

"Cram kicked out—"

"Not really kicked," said David. He repeated Cram's report.

"He'll consider he's been dynamited. Well, with my brother a priest, I'd do better not to rejoice as I could. But if he's gone, he's gone, and we've new jobs, and tough ones ahead of us."

CHAPTER III

THE SILVER SHIP

For nearly four years David had been an apprentice-student at the Lighter-than-Air School at Goodlow Field. During that time many changes had taken place. The school, at first housed in a single building on the Goodlow property, now had commodious brick buildings for classrooms, laboratories and dormitories. The school was run on an original scheme, which had proved most successful. It was co-operative. The students received free tuition and a small salary, in return for which they gave their labor. Any student falling below a certain grade was immediately dismissed.

This benevolent scheme of education was made possible by the kindness of one of America's greatest philanthropists, Mr. John Harrison Hammond, who added the strength of his millions to the Goodlow holdings at Ayre.

The erection of the great new hangar, or

dock, was a story in itself. Even in this day of architectural and engineering miracles, the building was unbelievably huge. It was the largest airport factory and dock in the world. Its floor was a vast concrete spread, the largest uninterrupted floor area yet built. Over this rose the dock structure, a cavernous semi-paraboloid building. From the passing airplane, it looked like a peanut or a silk-worm cocoon. It was lighted with tier after tier of glass, in steel frames, so precisely made that a push-button controlled whole units of windows. The enormous doors, two-thirds glass, slid on ball-bearing wheels along tracks imbedded in the floor. These, too, were operated by a one-man lever.

In the top of the arching roof was tackle to hold the dirigibles during construction. Here swung the great shapes slowly evolving from ghostly skeletons to the finished marvels ready for flight. There was space for the construction of two ships at the same time.

The ship that hung there partly finished was the largest yet built. Perfect in line, and carrying many new features; as yet unnamed, her career undecided, she drew David like a magnet. She was his dream ship, at last come true.

At the back of the dock built into the wall

was a row of offices for the executives. The central office belonged to Colonel Porter, A. C., U. S. A. retired, Commandant of the school and chief of the dock forces. Colonel Porter was a lifelong friend of Mr. Hammond, and his influence had persuaded the great financier to put his personal energy and many millions of his vast fortune into the great task of today—the development of aviation.

One morning late in May, the two friends sat in Colonel Porter's office.

"I hardly expected you so soon," said Colonel Porter.

"Well, Port, I've decided to spend the rest of my life around the ships. I like it. I'm not young, but my money can do the hard work. I'm inclined to help you push this business as far as it will go."

"Exactly what I hoped you would decide to do!" exclaimed the Colonel. "And you have already made a wonderful start. This ship you are financing—you would be surprised at the callers she has had; people from all over the world, looking her over, taking snapshots of her, writing down her dimensions. We could sell her tomorrow."

"Have any changes been made recently?" asked Mr. Hammond.

"Not a thing," said Colonel Porter. "Here

are the original specifications." He hunted up a long sheet of paper.

"Never mind the figures," said Mr. Hammond hastily. "My clipping agency sends me about two a day, usually different, but they all agree that she contains ten million, two hundred thousand cubic feet and is twelve stories high amidship. You know that item seems to make a great hit with the public. What will her lifting power be, Port?"

"Well, hydrogen gives us eighty pounds to the thousand feet, and helium sixty pounds to the thousand. That works out to eight hundred thousand pounds. You can depend on four hundred tons of useful lift."

"Gosh, that sounds like a lot!"

"It's handy to have."

"It does seem, Port, as though we ought to make more than seventy-five miles an hour with those five huge engines."

"It can't be done, Harry. Not with a ship that size."

"Did you decide to use the new weave of linen cloth for the covering?"

"Yes, it is a great improvement. And the new style seam-lacings hold perfectly. What are you going to name the ship, by the way?"

"I selected half a dozen names that sounded good to me," said Mr. Hammond. "Hammond

High-flyer, Harkaway, and some others, but daughter Dulcie objected. Made such a fuss that I said she could name it herself."

"What were her contributions?" asked Colonel Porter with a smile. He knew Dulcie Hammond.

"She didn't bother with a choice. She says the ship is named Moonbeam."

"It is a splendid name. Harry, you don't know how fine that ship is going to be. She will be the most beautiful ship in the air."

"I want her to be," said Mr. Hammond with a dogged, grim look that Colonel Porter knew of old. "I am planning to show that ship to the world, Port. She has got to be perfect. What do you think of following the course of the Graf Zeppelin, for a starter, and beating the G. Z.'s time?"

Colonel Porter whistled.

"I think it would be all right. Her maiden flight, eh? I wonder if she can do it."

"Nothing like trying, is there? When will she be ready to fly?"

Colonel Porter reflected.

"She will be finished about the first of June. Then she must make some trial flights. You can take off by the fourteenth or fifteenth. You will go, won't you?"

"You bet! I'm commander of that ship.

And I want you to pick out a few of the students, all grades, for staff. I think it would be a wonderful try-out for them."

"I'll do it," said Colonel Porter with enthusiasm.

"Why don't you come along, Port? You need a rest."

Colonel Porter groaned.

"Rest? Why, Harry, we are simply swamped with work. I couldn't possibly get away."

"I wish you could," said Mr. Hammond, and was silent a few moments. "Those gas bags," he continued, following the train of his thought, "they are absolutely impervious to any kind of gas, aren't they?"

"Absolutely, when made of the substance we call, for lack of a better name, gold-beater's skin. You know gold-beaters beat their gold into the tissue-like sheets used by the trade, by putting it between layers of the split and cleansed intestines of the ox, and pounding it. For the gas bags, they split and clean the intestines, and lay them out with overlapping edges. Others are laid on top, at right angles. These congeal into a mass of fabric, which is flexible, yet perfectly impervious."

"It certainly beats all," said Mr. Hammond.

"By the way, Port, whom shall I take on as captain? Got a good man?"

"The best!" said Colonel Porter heartily. "A man named Fraine. Captain Fraine is as good a man as flies. During the war he was shot down and badly wounded, and wears a small silver plate on his head. He has been with us for six years. I advise Fraine."

"All right; whatever you say goes. Just give me a good staff and a good crew." Mr. Hammond rose and stretched his great shoulders. "Let's go look at the Moonbeam."

The following day Mr. Hammond flew down to New York, but a telegram from Colonel Porter brought him back on the first of June. He found the Moonbeam lowered and workmen putting the final touches on her passenger gondola, establishing the monstrous engines in the five "eggs" that were waiting for them, and varnishing the propellers with the hardest, smoothest spar varnish, to reduce friction. The seam-lacings had been tightened, and the linen cover looked as pale and smooth as aluminum. Men were painting the window casings of the gondola, others were testing the screws and bolts holding the ladders leading from the five eggs into the hull.

Beneath the ship, groups of sightseers moved slowly. They came in chatting shrilly

after the manner of the Great American Tourist, but the immensity of the dock and the sight of the vast silver ship, so quiescent in the hands of her makers, seemed to quell them.

Mr. Hammond and Colonel Porter entered the ship through the door in the center of the right side of the passenger gondola. From the doorway, they walked straight ahead along a short passage to the center of the gondola, where they turned to the right, along another passage into the control room. This spacious room occupied the whole forward end of the gondola. The oval front was composed entirely of windows, through which the officer at the wheel had an unobstructed view.

Leaving the control room, the first room on the right was the chart room, a small cubicle fitted with drawers and filing cases. Opposite this was the navigator's room. Directly back of this was the galley, a small but perfect kitchen, where every inch of space was utilized by the latest electrical cooking utensils. The very sight of the wealth of pots and pans, the roasters, broilers, frying baskets and toasters made Mr. Hammond rub his hands delightedly.

Colonel Porter managed to get Mr. Hammond away from the galley, and they went

directly across the passage into the radio room.

The salon came next. This room was dining-room and lounge in one. It filled the breadth of the gondola, and had six broad windows that gave ample space for observation. There were six extension tables, chairs, a couple of divans, and a desk. The chair covers, window curtains and walls were bright with French flowered chintz. It was as gay and luxurious as a private yacht.

Back of this room, with a passage between, were the staterooms; six on each side, with double-decked bunks. These cabins were equipped with every luxury to be found on an ocean liner.

Behind the staterooms, one on either side of the passage, were the wash-rooms, beautifully equipped, one for men and one for women passengers. Everything in the passenger gondola was as near perfect as modern appliances and human ingenuity could make it.

They walked back to the radio room, in a corner of which a steel ladder led up into the hull. There they inspected the quarters of the officers and crew; plainer but just as comfortable as those down below. Mr. Hammond, notwithstanding his size, was well muscled and agile. He followed Colonel Porter along

the catwalks, among the fuel tanks, and then up the many ladders to the observer's platform, where they lifted the trap and stepped out on the very top of the ship.

"This dock is certainly a big place," said Mr. Hammond, staring about.

"Yes," replied Colonel Porter. "It is hard to realize its size. You can give its footage, twelve hundred feet long, three hundred and twenty-five feet wide, and two hundred and four feet high, but that doesn't convey much. But pause to remember that if it was placed in front of the national Capitol at Washington, it would hide the entire building except a little bit of the spire. Or you could lay the Woolworth building and Washington monument down in it, side by side, and almost lose them. Or you could stage ten full-sized football games in it at the same time, and still have plenty of room to spare."

They made their way down through the hull to the gondola, where workmen were now busy putting on electric light fixtures, and went back to Colonel Porter's office.

CHAPTER IV

ASSISTANT PILOT

A small and well-worn automobile was parked near the great hangar on the Goodlow lot. On the bent and sagging running board sat its owners, David Ellison and Red Ryan. Over three years had passed since the day David had been enrolled as a student in the Goodlow school for apprentices; three years of hard and often discouraging work, but the work had developed him. He was no longer a diffident boy. Manhood sat easily on his broad shoulders. Looking at him, Red Ryan's honest and loyal heart swelled with pride. He wondered if David had the least idea of his own success. Ryan knew—knew what the other fellows were saying, knew how the officers and pilots talked sometimes, while they stood watching his trained fingers making magical repairs on some weak or broken part. It never occurred to Red that his own uncanny cleverness had set him apart as the best me-

chanic on the lot. His thought was all for David—David, only twenty-two, and gosh-a-mighty, what he didn't know about dirigibles! What he hadn't already done with 'em!

Right now David was gazing lovingly through the open doors of the hangar at the vast silver shape rapidly approaching perfection and completion under the hands of its pygmy workmen. The vastness of the place, and the ship's tremendous bulk seemed to deaden the noise of hammers and bolts. She seemed to float there in the hangar. To David she seemed already restless to be away. He imagined a ripple of light down her silver side; a stir, as though she could no longer wait, but would break away and slip through the great door to be off alone into the infinite troubled tides of the sky.

Red followed David's entranced look.

"Ain't she the cat's whiskers, just?" he enquired lovingly. "Say, if she makes good on her trial flight, I'm just goin' to lay right down there, front of everybody, and cry, or pray, or swear, I dunno which."

"A little of each, perhaps," said David, snapping out of his dream. "I'll be right with you, bully boy."

"You know, David, they have told you off to do a lot of important work on that ship. I

don't believe you appreciate the fact. All the fellows are talking about it."

"Applesauce!" David retorted, laughing. "Everyone in the senior class has had his share."

Red hitched closer to David's side.

"The other day," he half whispered, "I was flat on me back under a tarpaulin in the far corner of the baggage room up in the hull, installing some wiring that's to lead down from the observer's seat on the top of the ship. The other fella had to go clear over to the storehouse for some wire. So I laid there tryin' to think out a simpler and safer installation. I don't like it the way it is, Dave. Too much danger during storms. Well, whilst I'm there, along comes Colonel Porter and himself."

"Who is himself?" asked David.

"That big bug; the papa of us all."

"You don't mean Mr. Hammond?" said David.

"You got it. That's the bird!"

"But what the devil is he doing here now? I thought he was in New York."

"I'm the boy to tell you," said Red, joyfully. "My brother, the chaplain, used to tell me, 'Red, never eavesdrop; 'tis a mean and unmanly trick, unworthy of a good Christian

b'y; but so be you do chance to hear anything, give it strict attention, and be sure to get the straight of it.' So I did. They come teeterin' along the catwalk, and stop opposite me. You know the Big Fella's quick and light steppin' as a cat, for all his size. Ladders and catwalks are pie for him.

"'What's bein' done here?' says the Big Fella.

"'Some wirin',' I heard Colonel Porter answer. Then there was some little talk or other that I don't just remember."

Red wouldn't tell what they had said at that point, but it glowed warmly in his honest heart; payment in full for many hours of grilling toil. Colonel Porter had explained the wiring, and had added,—

"We have the cleverest young mechanic in the school that I have ever come across. I believe he could make every part and assemble any known engine, after an hour's study. Name's Ryan."

Mr. Hammond had grunted.

"Hang on to him. He may be useful a little later on."

"Well, then what?" asked David, impatiently.

"Oh!" said Red. "Well then, 'What sorta mechanics you got?' asks the Big Fella.

" 'So-so,' says the Colonel.

" 'Only so-so?' growls Big Stuff. 'Better bounce 'em; the quicker the better.'

" 'Well, I dunno,' says the Colonel, lookin' wise the way he does. 'I dunno. There's one lad, now; our efficiency expert spent three days checkin' up on that b'y, and he figured it out that the fella had saved the company one and seven-eighths cents in a week, on insulated wire! In wan week, mind you; Ryan's the name.' "

"You big liar!" exploded David, grinning.

"Me?" Red's sea blue eyes were wide and innocent.

"Yes, you! When you lie, you always lie in a brogue. I can always tell."

"I wonder, now, if that's a slam on my ancestry," said Red slowly. "If it is, I got to fight the upstart who says it. Only, can a mechanic, first-class, stoop to the killin' of a mere apprentice? If you'd only shut up, David; if you could only learn to be still, I'd tell you what I been strugglin' to tell this hour back."

"Oh, go on; go on, for heaven's sake! Spill it if you know anything. I need something to pep me up. I'm going stale." David sighed.

Red laid a hand on David's arm and grew grave.

"It's about your baby up there, the ship. The Big Fella is plannin' no less than a round-the-world trip, for her maiden stunt."

"Round the world!" breathed David.

"That, and nothin' less!" affirmed Red. "Yep, by diligent listening I got it all. I'm afraid they thought they were alone. So they talked free. It seems that Mr. Hammond wants an American ship that will beat the Graf Zeppelin's time. And he thinks here's the ship. So do I. Well, Mr. Hammond is financing the trip, with a couple of others who will go along as passengers, just for the glory."

"Oh, Lord! Red, I wish I could go with her!"

"Don't you, just? But there's not a chance. You couldn't get in on that trip if you was disguised as a tin of biscuit. There will be millionaires that would get into overalls and carry oil cans to get to go."

"Of course," said David. "But I can't help wishing. Wouldn't you like it?"

"Me? Boy, I'd hang on to a rudder blade with me right hand from here to Japan, and then merely shift to the left. Like to go? Lord love me, David, wouldn't I just!"

David sat staring at the silver ship. Men scrambled about her, popping in and out of the openings.

"Listen, Davie," said Red. "Don't let your right ear know what I've poured into your left. My brother used to tell me, 'Whatever you hear, me young buccaroo, keep it under your hat.' But he wouldn't have counted you, David. 'Keep it to yourself,' says he. 'If it is trash, don't clutter the highways wid it. If it is something worth while, lock it up, Red; lock it up, like you would a dimant, till the fella that owns it wants to use it.' "

"I won't say anything," promised David. "You certainly like that Padre of yours, don't you?"

"So-so," said Red, chuckling. "He's grand if you're dyin' I've been told, but he's sure a murderin' cuss, so be you don't walk straight whilst you're enjoyin' your usual health. Come on, let's go down town and have a sody."

David was not listening. He pulled a worn notebook from his pocket and commenced to study its grimy pages.

"Come on, fella!" repeated Red. "Leap into the Rolls-Worse. I'm starvin' for a sody."

"I'm glad they used that new kind of covering, with those tricky interwoven seams," said David dreamily, ignoring the appeal of the starving one. "They are going to save lots of worry, Red, and it's certain they won't give. That old blimp we tried it on with rips here

and there to give the wind a chance, you remember? The seams never budged. The new alloy duralumin I like too, and the longer, slimmer line of the hull."

Red sat down again.

"Those engines! Dave, they are as perfect —Lord, I love 'em! All the time they have been in there on the blocks, stopping and starting, stopping and starting; well, they have talked to me, David. One day a girl came in, a sightseer; and she yelled, 'My, what a horrid noise! Isn't it just awful?' and I thought how nice it would be to tap her with a wrench, but I didn't. I let that engine answer. I tuned her up and you couldn't hear yourself think. Oh, but they are pretty, those engines! I don't know whether I love 'em most when they are quiet and dreamin' of what they can do, or when they are goin' full speed with every part doin' its bit, so smooth and so true that there's no words to describe it."

"You are a sentimental Irishman," said David.

"I'm an Irishman that wants a sody," said Red.

"They will be putting the last engine in place this afternoon, won't they?" asked David.

"Yes, and I've got to be here. Then she will

be practically finished. Just woodwork to wipe, and furniture to dust, and beds to make. Sounds like a housewarming."

"Did you know that they have named her?" asked David.

"No. I thought she was the Silver Ship."

"Of course, but she has to have a sort of given name, like the Shenandoah, poor girl, and the Dawn, and the Sun God, and the rest. I heard Mr. Hammond's daughter named her. She's the Moonbeam."

"That's all right," said Red approvingly. "I give the girl credit. The Moonbeam! Faith, it grows on me, Davie. Moonbeam!"

"I like it," said David. "Pretty, and easy to say, but not silly."

"Well, here's wishin' her all the luck in the world," said Red. "And the same to us. They just got to let me go when she takes her first try-out. I'd no sooner let those engines out of my sight first off than I'd use an umbrella for a 'chute."

"Better not let the engine crews hear you, you conceited devil! They think they're pretty kippy themselves."

"Good lads, all," admitted Red. "What they don't know about engines scarcely needs to be known, but it don't matter what you do, David, you have got to put something beside

knowledge in your work. It's like those old fellas who used to put human blood in their cauldrons of metal when they made their church bells. They thought it made the bells sound sweeter. And so it did, so long as they thought so. You can't say your engine is a fine old piece of bits and parts. You've got to love it. You remember last summer, when we flew east? I ran over to Providence to see my brother. Well, one night I wandered into the engine room at Brown & Sharpe's, and the chief engineer showed me his engines. Gosh! there were tunnels full of them. And he went along with an oil can and a bit of waste, rubbin' a bit here and a bit there, where God knows it didn't need it, pretending to oil; just loving them." He jumped up. "Honest, Dave, you've no heart! Come on! I've just got to have that sody—or perhaps I didn't mention it before?"

He took a step around the aged car, and stood staring.

"Come here!" he said. "See Mr. Hammond over there? Do you see who is with him? Or is he, maybe, all alone?"

David looked.

"Don't know the chap with him," he decided.

"Look again," begged Red. "Don't you

know that strut, and those skinny legs, and that face? Think, man, think!"

"Never saw him," declared David.

"Never? Well, listen here; may the Saints lead him off this lot, immediate! If they don't, there's cloud banks and rain and hail ahead for you and me. That's Cram!"

"So it is!" said David. "Well, what of it? He has no grudge against us."

"Hasn't he, then? Didn't you pass your exams, three years ago, and didn't he fail? Watch out, me lad! He hasn't changed his spots in three years. I know him, and all his breed."

"Don't be so suspicious," said David, watching the trim, thin figure slowly approaching. "Honestly, Red, why do you let that man get your goat? You never act like that with anybody else, no matter what they do."

Red shrugged. "Dunno!" he said. "My brother holds that every man has his own particular devil to torture and tantalize him. I feel shame, Davie, but Walter Cram seems to be my own little devil. I have got to have two sodies, now. I'm that upset."

Cram, for it was he, glanced idly at the passing roadster but did not recognize the occupants. The years had made little outward change in his appearance. He was

taller, still thin, and moved with nervous alertness. He wore glasses, and they disguised the shadows under his eyes; violet shadows, that hinted of escapades that he would not care to publish. For Wally Cram, the man, was still as devious as Wally, the boy. Strangely enough, the one fever that burned in his blood, his one dream, his sole ambition, was based on an overwhelming vanity.

Without the ability to achieve the eminence he aspired to, he longed for a foremost place in the public eye. In his thoughts all heroes wore his own features. Lindbergh, winging his lonely way to France; Byrd, exploring a frozen world; Andrews, forcing the Gobi desert to speak an articulate language of past æons—Cram wanted what they had, but he had grown into a lazy man, incapable of sustained effort.

Reading a newspaper in his New York hotel one day, Wally had seen an article that had given him a grand idea—a magnificent idea. At once he called his lawyers in Oklahoma City on long distance, and held a conversation with them filled with so many millions that even the telephone operator was impressed.

A week later he was in Ayre, and walking through the lobby of the hotel he heard a familiar voice.

"Why, Mister Cram!" it said.

"Dulcie Hammond, by all that's good!" ejaculated Cram. "What are you doing here?"

"Looking after daddy, as usual," Dulcie Hammond laughed. "He's here in pursuit of his hobby. Perhaps I should call it a life work. You know the new dirigible starts on her maiden trip around the world in two weeks, and naturally dad is going. He says I can't go; isn't that wet? In the meantime I am seeing that he takes his bicarb after meals, and making him lay off hot dogs, and pop corn and pie. Heavens, he's an unruly child! Between times I mostly hang around the plant and watch them put the finishing touches to the ship. Did you know that I named her? She's the Moonbeam."

"Fine! Why don't you go along?"

"It's to be a sort of stag party," said Dulcie petulantly. "I can't make dad understand that I wouldn't be a bother. I'll bet Lady Drummond Hay wasn't a bother. I met her in New York, and she told me their trip was just too galumptious. And I am just as good a sport as she is, and probably tougher, because I'm younger." She pondered. "Well, we'll see! But what are you doing here?"

"Just looking after some investments. I

have stock in the Goodlow Plant, and I have just invested a lot of money in the Moonbeam; enough, I hope, to get me a berth on her round-the-world cruise. I am going out to the drome now. Won't you come?"

"Got to do some shopping," said Dulcie. "Sorry. Oh, Wally, the ship is too beautiful for words, even now, while she is still unfinished."

Cram laughed. "Rot! The dirigible is nothing but a balloon."

Dulcie gave him a scornful glance.

"You have a sordid soul," she said, and walked away.

That night David and Red had orders to report at sunrise for a short trip in the Dawn, a smaller dirigible which had been in commission for a couple of months. They went up with the usual crew, and Mr. Hammond and Captain Fraine and half a dozen others as passengers. David, to his surprise, was put in full charge of the ship, Captain Fraine preferring to wander around, inspecting. They were out for twenty-four hours, without stops, and David returned the ship to Ayre, making a perfect landing at the hangar.

Red took him aside.

"Something's in the wind, fella. You didn't get to handle that ship just because they loved

you. And there's older chief mechanics than me who might have gone. Watch out!"

Two days later the Moonbeam was completed. The last workmen crawled out of the hull, while decorators reverently closed the door of the great passenger gondola. Every bag, cord, wire, seam, every bolt and screw had been tested and retested. She hung aloft in the vast hangar, a beautiful and majestic thing, ready for the infinite. David gazed and gazed.

"Before I managed to ditch school," said Red unexpectedly at his side, "they read us about a place called Mount Olympus. Grand big women lived there. Goddesses. Not real, you know, but I got an awful kick out of 'em. And the Moonbeam; ain't she a goddess? Those old goddesses used to pick up a mortal like they were nothin' and carry them off. And here's a silver ship, just waiting to gather up a load of folks, like an armful of babies, and go soarin' out and up and away into—Oh, my gosh! the thought makes me want to yell. I want to jump on my hat, or fight somebody."

David smiled. "I know. Pipe down, old son. Come on to quarters. I'm dog tired, and the silver ship will wait."

The following morning the ship took her

maiden walk out of the hangar, and was moored to the mast. Seeing her there, automobiles began to gather, street-car lines disgorged curious sightseers, and for hours a big crowd milled under the glistening shape. Toward evening the ship was drawn down and returned to the hangar.

At supper an official-looking envelope was brought to David. He read its contents unbelieving, then again perused the terse sentences.

Headquarters Aeronautical Board,
Goodlow-Zeppelin Company,
Ayre, Ohio.

Subject: Detail, Assistant Pilot, Moonbeam.
To: David Ellison, Pilots' School,
Goodlow-Zeppelin Company.

You have been selected by the Aeronautical Board of the Goodlow-Zeppelin Company to fill the position of assistant pilot on the dirigible Moonbeam, on its first trip around the world, leaving the hangar at Ayre, Ohio, at six A. M. on June 15th, 1930.

Your presence desired at headquarters, at nine o'clock tomorrow morning.

George Paine Porter,
Director, Lighter-than-Air Craft,
Goodlow-Zeppelin Company.

David forgot his supper, forgot everything. It could scarcely be real! While he struggled with his surprise and delight, hardly believing the good fortune that he had not even dared to hope for, he heard Red's voice.

"Read it! Read it, fella!" he cried, and he pressed into David's hand a letter similar to his own, appointing Red as chief mechanic on the round-the-world flight of the Moonbeam. For once Red had nothing to say. The moment was too great, the news too stupendous.

David pushed back his chair; he could not eat. They went out and, crossing the great landing field to the hangar, they sat down on a truck and looked at the closed doors.

"She's in there, Dave, safe and sound! And in two weeks she will carry us away over land and sea, rough mountains and sweet valleys—round the world, and home again. You and me, David; assistant pilot and mechanic!"

"Chief mechanic, as I read it," said David, smiling. "Well, I must wire my mother the good news."

"That's right, and I must telegraph my mother, too, and that blackguard brother of mine, as well. I'll just say to him, 'Your Reverence, the ugly duckling has become a swan. Am startin' on a world cruise in the Moonbeam on the fifteenth of June. What's to be done about it?' That will stop him all right."

"I can't think of a greater thing to have happen to us," mused David. "Around the world, Red! Get it? Seeing all those countries, and meeting so many people. The first

American dirigible to fly around the world!"

"Yes," said Red, "and having those blessed engines right where I can keep an eye on them, day and night. Going full blast, and me with an ear for every beat. I'm just crazy with joy, Dave. Let's go and get a sody."

They climbed into their jointly owned and jointly loved roadster, and started it toward the nearest soda fountain, its fenders flapping, its body squeaking and rattling as though in proud defiance of its softly purring motor—Red's "favorite child."

"We have come a good way in the past four years, Red," David bellowed over the din. "Sometimes the work has seemed pretty stiff, but I'd work twice as hard, if possible, for what I have gained."

"Yeah!" said Red, nodding his bright head. "And sometimes I feel that it just isn't so. All this. I'll wake up, and find myself a kid; in bed listenin' to a worn awning rope rattlin', and a freight train grumblin' on the sidin' across the street. You know, Dave, even when I was a kid there was something in me pushing up, and reaching out, for something I couldn't reach or see." His voice grew bitter. "I knew a fella once who smoked and caroused too much, and one day he went down and out. He'd never taken anybody's advice

about taking care of himself. Well, after his heart cracked on him, the poor devil just went around beggin' the rest of his gang to lay off, and go to bed once in a while. However, one day his poor old engine stopped, and that was the end of him.

"I was like that about school. Everybody tellin' me I ought to finish high school, and me knowin' better than the whole of 'em. I tell you, Dave, I'd give anything for the chance, now. Now I see what I've thrown away. And I need it; Lord, how I need it! It means that I've got to make it up, sweating and groaning. Night schools, and correspondence schools, and study. Because. so help me, Dave, I won't disgrace my engines.

"And it's a fact, Davie, I actually go around stoppin' kids on the street, and preachin' school to 'em. I say, 'Smoke if you like, and drink if you want to be a fool; but lay off long enough to get yourself through high school.' And I'm like the the poor fella in Lawton. I've a dark suspicion that I'm wastin' words."

CHAPTER V

A STOWAWAY

Day whirled after day, filled with pleasant labor. Each morning the Moonbeam was sent up for a flight which sometimes occupied but a few hours, and sometimes stretched into the night. At first there were many little things to do for her; adjustments, changes, the tightening of a screw here, the tuning up of a brace there. Men watched the propeller shafts, and listened to the smooth roar of the engines in their throbbing "eggs."

Captain Fraine, with his navigators at his side, tried for altitude and depth; nosed up, swept down, turned the ship in majestic circles. She responded perfectly. Her bulk, so much greater than that of any previous dirigible, seemed to have no effect in the action of her great engines, and she answered the wheel with absolute ease.

At mess one night Red strolled over to David's table with a letter. "From Padre Ryan," he said.

David took the sheet. It was brief.

Dear Swan:

Your night letter enchants me. I rejoice that you've such a big chance before you. And if you don't uphold the honor of the family I'll lay the curse of Saint Morvin on you. He's little known, but most efficacious.

I'll pray for you. As a child you had a bad way of leaning out of upstairs windows. Have the ship screened.

Your devoted and loving brother,
John.

David laughed. "He must be a card, all right."

"Well, he's not so bad," said Red. "A kindly priest, and a good son to his mother. David, I'm all set for the take-off."

So was David. On the morning of the fifteenth, he was the first man at the hangar, and it was his hand that pressed the lever, putting in motion the mechanism that slid back the great doors.

It was not yet dawn, but a vast mob packed the field. For months the building of the great dirigible had been followed, detail by detail, by an interested public. Her plans, charts and dimensions had appeared in all the leading newspapers and magazines, accompanied by long articles.

Finally came the news of her completion. The announcement of the round-the-world flight as her maiden effort was the spark

which caused the enthusiasm of the public to burst into flame. A year ago they had watched the detailed accounts of the Graf Zeppelin, as radiograms marked her flight.

Now a ship of their own; an American ship financed with American money and manned, from the commander down, with Americans, was to essay the same journey, hoping to better the time of the Graf Zeppelin. The papers devoted pages to the anticipated adventure. Radiograms, cables, letters of congratulation and good wishes, invitations from half the countries of Europe asking Mr. Hammond to detour in their several directions and stop off, were printed for the pleasure of a public which felt a proprietary interest in the Moonbeam.

All night the field had been black with people. With fine democracy they slept in their trucks, their flivvers, or their Packards, and at intervals ate hot dogs and sandwiches. Hundreds of soldiers labored to keep the field about the hangar clear for the departure of the outgoing ship. And still they came. The first trolleys were packed with frantic hordes that pushed and jostled to get near the ropes that had been stretched along for hundreds of yards, and through which people continually broke.

At last, as the crews walked the great gleaming shape out onto the field, a deafening cheer broke like a portentous wave. Hoarse voices cried, "Good luck, Moonbeam! Good luck!—'ray! 'ray! 'ray!—Go in and win, Moonbeam! Beat the Zep! Beat the Zep!"

When Mr. Hammond's car drove up, Dulcie hopped gaily out, her little Pekinese hugged under her arm.

"Isn't this jam perfectly terrific?" she said to Captain Fraine. "We could scarcely get through."

"Most of them have been here all night," said Captain Fraine. "They're certainly enthusiastic. These troops the Governor sent down have had a lively time keeping them off the field."

"Any of the passengers here yet?" asked Dulcie.

"Most of them, although it's early yet. They seem afraid the boat will start without them!"

"I'm going on board," said Dulcie. "I want to put dad's bicarbonate where he will see it. He always loses it, poor dear, whenever he gets indigestion."

"Plenty of time, Miss Hammond," said Fraine, as he escorted her to the steps leading up to the passenger gondola. "I wish you were going with us."

"So do I!" sighed Dulcie.

She went into her father's cabin, and arranged several small bottles and boxes on a shelf. Her father came in.

"Wish I dared take you with me, honey," he said wistfully. "But I can't risk you, can I? If anything should happen—"

"It's just as you say, daddy. I've teased all I have the face to. But please don't wave at me when you start. I might bust right out and cry. So I'll run right off and get lost in the crowd."

"You behave yourself while I'm gone, Dulcie, and no running around with that young bounder of a Greene chap back home."

"I won't speak to him while you are away," Dulcie promised. "And I will behave all the time exactly as though you had your eye on me."

She kissed him lightly, and was gone, leaving him with a feeling of loneliness and loss that overshadowed the pleasure of the take-off.

The engines were adding a deep roar to the human sounds. People strained against those in front, and pushed them into the ropes. Small dogs dodged into the open space and barked. The crew swarmed up and took their places in the ship, with excitement written

large all over them. Two of the reporters paused for last-minute shots. Movie cameramen, thanking their stars for the bright sun that had appeared, ground frantically. Automobiles began to toot their horns as at length, the last man on board, the ground crew of five hundred men walked toward the ship from the spread-fan positions they had been holding. The twenty thousand spectators let out a mighty roar; a sea of upturned faces watched as the Moonbeam rose slowly, her motors drowning the noise of the crowd.

From a window Mr. Hammond searched through his glasses for a familiar little figure. "I thought the kid would wave me off, after all," he said to himself. "Wish now I had brought her along. At least I would know where she was."

"Couldn't have had a better take-off, commander," said Captain Fraine, at his side. "Her engines simply sing."

"Glad you are pleased, captain," answered Mr. Hammond. "We'll soon see how she performs. We are out to make a record, as you know, and that means a steady, day-after-day excellence. From Lakehurst to Friedrichshafen is approximately forty-two hundred miles. We have got to make up some of our time on that leg of the trip. I don't know

Russia at all; in fact, I am a little dubious about it, although Dr. Eckener experienced no trouble whatever."

"Why didn't you bring your daughter along, commander?" asked Captain Fraine. "The Graf Zeppelin had a woman passenger."

"I know, I know! I suppose I am just fussy over the kid. I wanted her where I knew she would be safe. She's going to the seashore. Hope she won't swim out too far."

"Does she drive her own car?" asked Fraine, hiding a grin.

"Lord, yes, drives like the very devil." He turned his back, and looked down. The crowds were far away. "Buck up, buck up, you old fool!" he told himself savagely. "She's all right—but I'll bring her along next time."

The sunlight was glorious; glittering and flashing, the ship circled above Ayre, returned to her own field, and dipped low in a graceful gesture of farewell, while the waiting crowds went mad. Rising, she sped eastward toward Lakehurst, her first stop. Under her flowed the lovely panorama of Ohio; gently rolling woodland, wide and opulent farms with dark patches of plowed lands and the lush green of springing crops. Towns appeared here and there, little huddles of houses at crossroads, and large cities, where the smoke of manu-

factories spiraled lazily upwards, as though pointing indolently at the passing ship.

David went into the chart room, and found Red poring over the passenger list.

"I see we've got a medico with us," he said.

"Yes, Dr. Forsythe; of course the Company would send their own doctor."

"Here's a big guy in his line," said David. "Sanford Hamilton, of New York, and a dozen other places. Has so much money he can't count it, but just can't stop making more. Has the habit."

"Wish I could get a habit like that. Well, the Ryans own the two most worthless farms on God's green earth, and I never can get over expectin' to see a fine squirt of oil come leapin' out of them, although the experts say they are as dry as dust. Who's next on the list?"

"Dr. Martin Trigg, and Dr. Nicholas Sims. They are the two old professors from Princeton. Scientists of some sort—big bugs."

"I helped 'em aboard," said Red, chuckling. "One of 'em said 'Thank you, my boy, thank you,' just as pretty, but the other looked at me till I felt like a bug on a pin."

"The next four I haven't seen," said David.

"Skip 'em," counseled Red. "Reporters. Wild-eyed, sort of. You can always tell 'em.

Always huntin' a scoop for the next edition, regardless of time or place."

"These two are men Commander Hammond is trying to interest in dirigibles."

"Uh huh," said Red. "Be polite."

"Emil Hausen—he's a German. We leave him at Friedrichshafen."

"I must practice my German on him," said Red. "I know four fine upstandin' words: *Ach du lieber Augustin.* Would you think they'd sound homelike to the poor wanderer, Davie?"

"Try 'em!" laughed Davie; "I'll pick up the pieces." He wandered off, stopping to admire the salon. In one corner, at a small but perfectly appointed desk, Mr. Hamilton already sat dictating rapidly to his secretary. The great king of Wall Street was preparing to radio his orders, keeping a tight rein on his active money.

At a window the two old scientists, Doctors Trigg and Sims, quarreled in low, tense tones over something referred to in such lengthily technical terms that David did not know whether they had disagreed about dinosaurs, angleworms, or air currents. As David passed, the smaller of the two men looked up and nodded.

"Well, son," he chirruped in a pleasant

crisp voice, "making fair progress, I should say. This your first trip? Great experience; illuminating, developing. Make the most of it—you are young. Perhaps you will like it so well that before we have entirely circumnavigated the globe, you will have sprouted mental wings and will accept the ether for your habitat. I hope so—I hope so! Aerial navigation needs young blood, young enthusiasms."

"Bosh!" retorted the second sage, Doctor Sims himself. "Bosh! There is no young enthusiasm; it's grown old, money loving, comfort seeking; its bones creak. Don't I know? Don't I teach about a hundred and fifty youngsters every day of the week? Bah!"

"Sims, you are as dry as a dinosaur egg," Doctor Trigg exploded. "As an instructor in grades equaling yours, I am also in a position to collect data and observe reactions. The world is moved by youthful enthusiasms. It is, thank God, an inexhaustible force, propelling the world; a force, Sims, which our instruments cannot gauge, which all your retorts and chemical tests cannot resolve into its component parts. And let me tell you, Sims, in the modern aviator there lives the spirit of the adventurers of all time; a gallant, intrepid and invincible army that comes marching down the gray ages to be reincarnated as

the greatest of all the cavaliers of chance.

"For centuries they have been crusaders; they have sailed uncharted seas; they have braved killing heat and searing cold. They have fought the dragons of every age and clime, wrestling with the earth for jewels and gold, building glittering cities in desert places, throwing fairy bridges from crag to crag. Now, spurning the reclaimed earth, they have taken their indomitable courage and their boundless enthusiasm, Sims, into the limitless sea of the air, whose currents and eddies and tempests are more treacherous and terrible than ever beset any ocean."

He had been tapping his words out on Doctor Sims' bony knee. Suddenly realizing an acute discomfort there, Doctor Sims removed the knee abruptly, and looked up at David.

"Now you," he remarked, ignoring his brother educator's dissertation. "You're planning to be a big newspaper man, aren't you? Eh?"

"Why, no, sir," said David.

"Automobile tires, then—automobile tires," Doctor Sims cut in.

He seemed about to launch on a tirade against tires, and David spoke quickly. "I am an aviator," he said, "and I want to thank Doctor Trigg for what he just said. It is all

true;" and looking at the doctor with a light bow, he added, "and it is pretty fine for us youngsters to feel that men like you understand us, and are with us." He smiled the smile that always won friends for him, and passed on into the little hallway.

Behind him he could hear Doctor Trigg burst into a loud cackle. He knew, without looking, that Professor Sims was dodging a skinny finger.

"What a peachy old card!" thought David. "And can't he just pour out the language? He's just right, too."

In the hall outside the washroom he found Red. He seemed preoccupied.

"Hello," he said. "Say, Dave, listen; do you hear a funny noise?"

David listened. "Why, yes. Sounds sort of squeakish. We are not near an egg, and there's nothing over us but the crew's quarters, is there?"

"Nothing over or under; but it's a darned queer noise. You can't hear it five feet away." To prove it, he slid along with his ear pressed against the partition. "It's here, somewhere, right here by Mr. Hammond's cabin." He went down on his knees. "Comes from low down. Now I can't hear it at all. Damn queer!"

David also knelt, and they listened in silence, staring at each other. The sound was intermittent; a whiffling, wheezing squeak, and occasionally a faint tearing sound.

"Fabric going," said David anxiously. "It's not a bag, because the disturbance is low down by the floor."

"Well, we got to find out about that," declared Red. "It may be just a piece of cloth rattling at a window, or something, but there mustn't be any unusual noises on a boat like this, where everything means something. I'd hate to have to turn back now."

They stood up as Mr. Hammond entered the passageway. David explained their trouble.

"Under or over my room, eh?" he said, unlatching his door.

A small brown streak shot into the hall, recognized the paternal trousers, whirled and fell at Mr. Hammond's feet in an ecstasy of delight.

"What the devil—why, you damned little runt, how do you happen to be here? It's Dulcie's pup, Koko." He picked up the little fellow and petted him. "Dulcie must have shut him in my room while she was on board, and then the poor kid was so upset when she left that she must have forgotten the little beggar. Well, Koko, we can't drop you off-

side, can we? We will just send a 'gram to your missie, and take you with us."

"There's our funny noise, Red," laughed David.

"Gee, you had me scared, you little scoundrel!" remarked Red, with a sigh of relief.

"He hates to be shut up; I'll bet he was chewing something up," Mr. Hammond chuckled. "Well, I'm glad he's here. I wish I'd brought Dulcie, too. She'd be just about as safe up here as she will be swimming and canoeing and dancing, and racing all over creation in that damned car of hers." He looked at the boys, and saw that their eyes, staring over his shoulder into the little cabin beyond, were filled with amazement, amusement, and concern.

Red broke unexpectedly into a hearty laugh. "Well, Mr. Hammond—excuse us, sir! Beat it, Dave!"

They bolted into the salon, and Mr. Hammond turned to his room. What he saw there made his old heart leap. He dropped the dog.

"Dulcie!" he cried, and Dulcie ran into his open arms.

"You are a bad, bad girl!" he whispered presently. "You are a stowaway; and you have made a fool of your poor old father. Who put you up to this?"

"No one, daddy," said Dulcie, rubbing her eyes which were full of tears and her nose which bore a nice imprint of rough tweed. "I knew you really wanted me, and you know my judgment is much better than yours in such things, so I just stayed quietly in here. I knew you would come in later, but Koko nearly spoiled it all. And you really do want me? I heard what you said. It's a lesson to you, too; your child is going along wherever you go, and it only makes unnecessary scenes when you try to stop her."

Mr. Hammond blew his nose loudly.

"Well, darling, I am glad you are here. Yes, I'm delighted; but don't get it into your head that you have established a precedent. No, ma'am!"

"All right, precious. Now comb your hair; it looks all rat-taily. And take your bicarb; it is long past time for breakfast. I'm starved. That small suitcase is mine. I took your things out of it and put them all in your other one. You are a rotten packer, daddy. Please move the man in the next stateroom out when you get round to it. I'll take it."

"Do you mean," said Mr. Hammond, grimly wagging a finger at the suitcase, "that you had this all cooked up yesterday?"

"Oh, for weeks, daddy darling. Did you

honestly think I would consider letting you come alone? I'm surprised. I'm starved, too. What an appetite this nice high air gives one!"

"Come on to breakfast then," Mr. Hammond groaned. "Let's get it over with!"

"I don't see any reason for you to be embarrassed, if I am not," said Dulcie, doing a little careful work with a lipstick. "It was frightfully embarrassing for me to be left at home like a little girl."

"Too bad!" growled Mr. Hammond, a twinkle in his eye that belied the tone. "Too bad! Well, gimme that infernal soda, and let's go."

"What's in there?" said Dulcie, pointing to a large box on a chair. "Koko seems to think it's something to eat. He nearly tore the paper."

"He's a smart little beggar," said Mr. Hammond, in an offhand manner. "Oh, yes, that's yours, that box. Candy—thought you might like to have it."

"Daddy!" cried Dulcie, casting herself at him. "Daddy, you precious adorable old lamb-pie! You knew I would come!"

"Well, I confess I did have hopes you would pull it off," said the adorable lamb-pie sheepishly.

CHAPTER VI

THE CONTROL ROOM

Mr. Hammond had no occasion to worry over Dulcie's welcome. After a hearty laugh all round at her father's expense, she became, as Doctor Trigg said, "the child of the regiment." Her sunny presence raised the morale of the whole ship. Only Red groaned.

"We've got to keep topside-upside now, whatever happens," he said.

Doctor Trigg took her under his special care, muttering to Doctor Sims, "More youthful enthusiasm, my boy; more youthful enthusiasm! She wants to fly, too, you see."

"G-r-r-r-r bah!" replied Doctor Sims briefly.

Those of the passengers who were flying for the first time watched the distant earth with fascinated and slightly worried eyes. They seemed disinclined to leave the windows, and ate their excellent luncheon without interest. By the time afternoon tea was served, however, they apparently decided that the globe would not disappear if they failed to keep a

restraining gaze upon it, and talked gaily over the hot toast and marmalade.

Radiograms had been sent ahead to Lakehurst, and answers received. They were eagerly expected, but Mr. Hammond decided that their stop there should be a very brief one.

Lakehurst, they found, when the ship slid into view above the field, was at least ready with a noisy welcome. Whistles, horns and sirens tooted, screeched and moaned. The landing crew ran out to secure the ropes, as Captain Fraine eased her gracefully down. The steps were adjusted, and the door of the passenger gondola was opened. The passengers, warned that they must be on board again at eleven o'clock, stepped down, not sorry to find terra firma actually under their feet again. A group of officials and leading citizens welcomed Mr. Hammond and his officers, and the ship was rapidly propelled into the big hangar, where the local force of mechanics and engineers assisted the Moonbeam's own crew in a microscopic examination of every part. An extra amount of fuel and gas was taken on, being stored in the place of ballast. An extra quantity of dry ice was shipped, and all commissary stores checked up.

Time passed rapidly, and the passengers commenced to return, hurrying in taxis and

on foot. Mr. Hamilton's secretary rushed ahead with a bundle of telegrams; Doctors Trigg and Sims came with their arms full of papers and magazines; a car whirled up, and the driver hurriedly approached Dulcie just as she was about to mount into the gondola and handed her a great box from the officers of the field. Long rose stems stuck intriguingly out at one end.

"What has happened to Captain Fraine?" inquired David of Mr. Hammond as they stood near the steps.

Looking very white, Captain Fraine approached. A couple of young officers accompanied him. He held a bloodstained handkerchief to his head but managed to laugh as he saw them.

"Not so bad as it looks, commander," he said lightly.

"What happened?" demanded Mr. Hammond.

"They are doing some construction work back in the hangar," one of the strangers explained, "and something had loosened the supports of a platform where some boards were lying. A two-by-four slipped off, and came down and hit the captain here, right on the head. It might have been pretty serious. It's too bad."

"It will be all right as soon as Dr. Forsythe puts a bit of plaster on it. Don't think of it."

"We'll get on board, and see the doctor at once," advised Mr. Hammond. "Go with him, David."

Dr. Forsythe proceeded to examine the bump. It was a bad one, but the skin was only slightly broken. He stopped the bleeding, and plastered it up. Captain Fraine declared that he felt as good as new, and went directly into the control room, while David returned to Mr. Hammond.

"Weren't we to pick up Walter Cram here at Lakehurst?" he inquired.

"We were," Mr. Hammond replied. "He has just five more minutes to get here."

"Well, looks like he'd made it, at that," said David, as a taxi raced up, stopped at the gate with a jolt, and an agitated figure leaped out and hurried across the field, a suitcase in each hand. A minute later, Cram stood smiling beside them, breathless but still self-assured.

"Hope I didn't keep you waiting long, commander," he said ingratiatingly.

On the stroke of twelve, with Lakehurst making all the noise it could, the Moonbeam took off, and soon after the passengers retired, leaving only the officers in charge to watch while she started over the high sea.

Wednesday morning found everyone refreshed and enthusiastic. Dulcie's Lakehurst roses gave the salon a gala appearance. Below them the Atlantic lay as smooth as a floor, the bright sun glistening on its surface.

They had been flying very low. Two liners passed beneath them, and saluted with puffs of fleecy smoke. In return the ship majestically inclined her silver nose in a triple dip.

Later they gained altitude smoothly, and reached fifteen hundred feet. Now little fleecy clouds met them and broke like foam on the prow. The air was clear, the sun blinding. The passengers accepted the new environment with ease. They read, slept, or wrote letters filled with detailed descriptions.

David found it hard to absent himself from the control room for more than a few minutes at a time, although with Captain Fraine in command and Lieutenant Florsheim as second pilot, David had actually no more to do than an observer, except for his turn at the wheel. Mr. Hammond came in often, too. On one of his visits his eyes were attracted to Captain Fraine as the young man pressed his palm to the top of his bandaged temple.

"Is that troubling you, Fraine?" he inquired.

"It's really all right," replied Captain

Fraine. "Just sore, and tender. The plank hit me squarely on my old wound. The place has always been a little troublesome. Worse in stormy weather, I notice. There's a silver plate in there, and I think it doesn't fit very well. I mean to have it looked after, sometime."

"Better not neglect it," advised Mr. Hammond.

"It really has never troubled me enough to speak of, but that board would have given a good crack to a harder head than mine."

"Well, don't try to stand all the watches. Make these youngsters take that wheel. Come back with me, and take it easy."

"Thank you, sir, I will presently," said the captain. He lifted a hand toward his head again, but hastily withdrew it. David, watching him, knew how he felt.

Back in the lounge, Dulcie was being entertained by Walter Cram. He was telling her far too much, but he didn't know it. His egotism, his silly pride, his preposterous vanity ran over his narrative like an ugly stain, and through it all a slimy envy of David that puzzled Dulcie. As soon as she could, she left him and wandered around until she found Red Ryan, busy with his eternal testing.

"Do you ever stop?" she asked.

"I don't want to, Miss Hammond. I love it. Every time I try a screw or test a wire, I think, 'Here, you beauty, you can just depend on Red, who loves you like a sweetheart, to keep you trim and true.' And all my fellas feel the same. We just love the Moonbeam, and what you feel love for, turns toil into pleasure."

"What a man you are!" said Dulcie warmly. "Tell me, do you always tell the truth?"

"I try to," said Red, looking puzzled.

Dulcie made the plunge.

"Well then, why does Mr. Cram hate David so?"

"My God!" exclaimed Red, dropping a wrench, "how did you discover that?"

"He's been talking to me, about himself mostly, and he didn't say a word about David that you could pin to, but he hates him poisonously."

"Honest, Miss Hammond," said Red admiringly, "you are one smart girl."

"Well, you know it, too."

"I do so," said Red, "but David doesn't. Not he! He's got more brains and better, than anyone I know, but no common sense when it comes to side-steppin' a rattler."

"But why? What's the answer?" demanded Dulcie.

"How long have you known him?" hedged Red.

"Cram? Oh, two or three years. I used to go down to Princeton for dances and what-not. That's where I first heard of David. The three men who dragged me around to rabbles were friends of his at prep school."

"Yeah, Butter Brown, and Len, and Smithy?"

"Right first time," said Dulcie. "David has told you. Well, Wally tried to give me a rush. Gee, he was a wet smack! And he wouldn't take hints. I was bored to tears, and the boys all offered to take him off and kill him. But all that doesn't explain why he has it in for David."

"Visibility increasin'," commented Red. "David doesn't just shun you, Miss Hammond. That wouldn't just please Wally. But that's only part of it."

Speaking in a low tone, he told her how, almost four years ago, David had passed his entrance exams to the pilots' school, while Cram had failed. He told her a great deal about Wally, as man and boy.

"He's not as bad as I make out, perhaps," he finished, "but even as a boy Wally always magnified every slight or injury to Mr. Walter Cram, and retaliated on a big scale."

"I think it's a shame!" cried Dulcie. "It makes me have a horrid feeling."

"Well, we'll just keep an eye out, and see what we see," said Red as he went off in search of a possible loose screw.

Dulcie liked Red. She liked his bright smile, and the twinkle in his blue eyes. She didn't care who he was, or whence he came. He was so true, so merry, and so unassuming that he could be any man's friend. Yes, she liked Red, and she liked David. She certainly did like David.

During the lunch hour the Moonbeam sped smoothly along at an altitude of one thousand feet. Dulcie declared that it was like being on an ocean liner, only nicer. She proved a joy unspeakable to the young reporters, the professors regarded her with apparent curiosity, and even Mr. Hamilton induced her to talk to him a while. Tea-time was one of the pleasantest hours of the day. No one suffered but Koko, the little dog, who stuffed on cakes, and groaned for hours afterwards.

That night the company dispersed very early. The altitude, the crisp untainted air and the novelty combined to make everyone sleepy. Mr. Hammond was in the best of spirits. Tail winds had helped them on, they had used all the engines, and were already

three hours ahead of the schedule of the Graf Zeppelin.

Thursday morning, the seventeenth of June, found the ship sailing serenely along over a floor of heavy clouds. The sun shone brightly, and the air was even, but there was a low humming in the wires that disturbed David. He found Red in his cubicle, and told him that he looked for a storm.

"Well, I've a prickling in my thumbs, too," said Red. "And when it comes, it's going to be a wow. I think I'll take a look over the old boat and see that everything is ship-shape."

He commenced to put on the smooth buttonless overalls which, with felt shoes, were always worn by anyone moving about in the hull. They were designed to prevent any scratching or tearing of the fabric of the gas bags and air bags.

"God help the man at the head of a gang; he's every man's slave. My crew is made up of fine efficient fellas, but this trip has gone to their heads. As soon as they saw themselves crossin' big water, they all took out little notebooks from their kits, and commenced jottin' down 'experiences'.

"An' when I said, 'You blamed lunatics, what for is that?' they told me they were 'writing it up for the papers at home'! Tryin'

to be a bunch of Lindys, and Byrds, and Strassers. I simply said, 'And have I novelists, or have I mechanics, then?' "

David laughed and asked, "Got another 'all?"

He slipped into the garment Red threw him, and together they went up into the hull.

That afternoon the motion of the ship became a little jerky; and David and Red, on another inspection trip, had some trouble in making their way over the bags, along the catwalk, and among the taut wires and spanners. Occasionally they stood listening to the talk of the ship, with its multitude of little mechanical noises which, to the educated ear, was harmonious as an orchestra.

"Singin' pretty, isn't she?" Red said finally. "Hey, there, don't that wire just in front of us sag a bit?" He wormed his way over to the winch and pulled up the offending brace, testing it until it sang softly.

"Now for the eggs full of engines," he said, as he started back, David following.

"Honestly, Red, all this isn't your job," protested David.

Red turned and stared deep into David's eyes. For the first time David saw pin points of flame in the blue depths. He spoke, and his voice carried a new note.

"Any job's my job, so be it's for the Moonbeam. There's going to be a blow, Dave. We're coming into wind. I have seen too many 'northers' in Oklahoma to make any mistake. What I want to know is, why don't they radio the nearest station and see what weather's scheduled ahead."

"The receiver's gone on the blink," said David briefly. "That's why they didn't get any messages through."

"Saints keep us, that's that!" muttered Red. "Well, let's shove along. I want to see what the engines are doing."

They climbed down into the eggs, one by one, and Red's keen eyes took note of every part of the enormous throbbing engines, each controlled by two earnest and keen-eyed engineers. A third man sat on a small stool, always ready to stand by in case of trouble.

Later, as they entered the observation room, after removing their overalls, Red grunted. "Everything looks okay," he said, "but I wish Miss Hammond was at home in her own house, instead of bummin' along up here a mile or so from anything more solid and endurin' than a stiff breeze."

"You're right," said David. "Honest, Red, she is the nicest kid, and such a good sport."

"I think so," said Red. "Gosh, did you feel

the car shake then? We struck a crack in the wind. Yep, Miss Hammond is the real thing, all right. She is so nice to everybody. Why, she treats me just as good as she does you, Dave."

"Better!" assented David, bitterly. "Gosh, there's another crack! Feel her bounce!" He was flung against the nearest chair, where he clung for support for a moment, until the ship again rode on an even keel. A little tremor ran through the Moonbeam; she rolled a little. Several of the passengers who were in the salon hurried to their cabins to rescue small articles which might be broken in the event of rougher weather. Others crowded close to the windows, watching the scudding clouds with anxious faces.

Fifteen minutes passed, then the ship raised her nose, reared in a long curve, and swooped downward. From the galley came the sound of breaking dishes, followed by a yell of anguish from the cook. Flung into each other's arms, David and Red executed a clumsy dance about the room before they could get their balance, as the ship righted and straightened out again.

"Whew!" said Red, rubbing the back of his head where it had bumped against a hook.

"Well, I don't like that so well," said David.

"I am going to take a squint at that weather chart, and then look at the rear engine again," said Red. "Coming?"

"Go on," said David. "I'll join you as soon as I put on another sweater. I'm cold." He turned and went into his cabin as Red hurried forward.

David had to unpack the sweater, but he didn't hurry. He knew that Fraine was on duty. He slipped on the heavy garment, then sauntered toward the control room. As he approached it a yell broke through the monotonous sounds of the gondola. A hoarse scream, another, and a jabbering laugh. He ran into the control room, and for an instant stood frozen by the sight that met his eyes.

The wheel was deserted but, caught by its stabilizing device, held the ship on her course. On the floor, apparently dead, lay Lieutenant Florsheim. Just beyond him lay Van Arden, a crumpled heap face down. Captain Fraine, his face contorted in an expression of insane frenzy, held Red Ryan by the throat against the wall with one hand, while he poised a heavy wrench for a murderous blow with the other.

At David's shout, the madman hesitated. As the iron came crashing down, David caught the wrist and deflected the blow which

would have cracked Red's head like an egg-shell. Then ensued an actual life-and-death struggle. David tried desperately to get a subduing grasp on the crazed captain, while Red, rallying his strength, struggled for a throat hold.

The inhuman strength of madness filled Fraine. David and Red were both tall and splendidly muscled, yet in his frenzy he swung them about like children. He centered his attention on Red, who gurgled as Fraine's sinewy hands closed for the second time on his windpipe. Lights flashed before his eyes. He choked, sagged, and then all at once it was over. David had put every ounce of the strength of his trained muscles into a lightning uppercut. It landed neatly on the captain's chin. He crashed to the floor beside Florsheim, unconscious.

At the door faces appeared: Mr. Hammond, Mr. Hamilton, a dozen others, among them Dr. Forsythe. Van Arden was trying to sit up. Captain Fraine groaned. Florsheim lay like dead, blood from a gaping wound on his head spreading on the floor. Red nursed his swollen neck, and David leaned panting against the instrument shelf.

"Fraine has gone crazy, doctor," said Red hoarsely. "When I got here Florsheim was

out, and he was trying to kill Van Arden."

"Get all three to their bunks," the doctor ordered.

A swift examination showed that Van Arden was suffering from merely a heavy blow on the jaw. All he wanted was peace and silence, and a chance for his head to stop whirling. Florsheim was badly hurt, with a long scalp cut, and the doctor feared concussion.

Captain Fraine, on the first approach to consciousness, evinced such symptoms of acute delirium that Dr. Forsythe immediately gave him an opiate.

Mr. Hammond came back to the control room and took the wheel from the still shaky David. "I will take the first watch," he said. "Dulcie has some tea for you and Red in the salon."

Nothing loath, they walked back and sat down, as Dulcie, followed by the sputtering chef, brought in steaming tea and crackers.

Dulcie's little hands trembled as she set the cups before them. "Drink it," she said. "It will fix your throat, Red, and set you up, David. Oh, wasn't it awful?" she quavered. "What did happen?"

"I don't know what started it," said Red. "When I got there, Fraine had done for Flor-

sheim entirely, and Van Arden was out. When he saw me, he quit kicking Van Arden and grabbed me. David was a welcome sight. Fact is," he suddenly sobered, "he would have done for me, Davie. I never saw anything like his strength. You'd have thought I was a baby. Why, he was choking me and trying to tap me with the wrench, all at the same time."

"Have more tea," Dulcie shuddered. "And you, too, David."

"Thanks, no. I'm all bucked up," said David, and left them to go forward.

"Take the wheel, David, while I see how Fraine is," Mr. Hammond said, as David came again into the control room. He patted the boy reassuringly on the shoulder as he went back toward the cabins.

David stared out into the deepening gloom. The afternoon was nearly gone. A strange darkness was beginning to surround them. The ship was again running with the wind, not smoothly but very swiftly. They were making nearly ninety miles an hour. He hoped the wind would hold behind them, but he felt little cross currents already. As he watched, he saw far ahead a swirl of black tossing clouds rise from the cloud floor below, as though picked up in giant fragments which

wove and blended into a thick tossing barrier.

Mr. Hammond returned.

"Well, David," he said, "it looks as if it was up to you, now. Things are pretty bad in there. Doc says there must be a piece of bone pressing on that head wound of the captain's or a tiny splinter working around inside, and that blow he got at Lakehurst about finished him. Doc has given him a shot of morphine, and he is asleep. He says an operation will fix him up.

"Poor Florsheim has a cracked skull, and needs hospital care as soon as we can make Friedrichshafen. Van Arden is still groggy. He will be all right again in a couple of days. You will have to take charge of the ship, David. It's a chance for you to show your mettle. Show what the school at Ayre can do. I'm back of you, but while I command the ship, you steer; understand?"

David's eyes remained on the black curtain ahead.

"Yes, sir," he said. "And if those are your orders, sir, I am going to cut down now to a lower altitude, and find better weather. There's a bad blow ahead. See the lightning?"

"Pretty bad, way ahead there," said Mr. Hammond, "but you must not try going down. Heavens, no! Don't you know that Captain

Fraine was all against that? Go up, if you must, but not down."

"It will be safer below."

"I can't allow it, David. We have got to go by precedent, and not experiment, now."

"It is not experiment with me," David argued, forgetting in his anxiety that Mr. Hammond was his commander. "I have done it on trial flights, and it worked perfectly." He watched the approaching cloud bank. "I have got to do it."

Mr. Hammond's face hardened. "I forbid it," he said. "Understand?" and without waiting for a reply walked away, leaving David to stare at the ominous clouds, now shot with countless little veins of flame.

"And I am captain and two navigators, all in one, and in full charge!" said David to himself, bitterly adding, "Like Mike, I am!"

CHAPTER VII

THROUGH THE STORM

Dinner that night was a rather somber occasion. The ship pitched badly, and there was a good deal of difficulty in keeping the dishes on the table. When the waiters opened the door going into the galley, the chef could be heard calling down curses on the day he had left home. Mr. Hamilton was silent but stoical, while his secretary was near collapse. Wally's verbosity was turned off like a spigot. He was green with fear. The reporters were suspiciously jovial. One of them was constructing a little model parachute with a few bits of wood, cloth and string. Questioned, he said smilingly that he was going to send down a bottle with a message in it.

Doctor Sims remarked gloatingly, "Last message, I take it, if we are *in extremis*. Very interesting indeed."

"Don't be morbid, Sims," said Doctor Trigg calmly. "Look out for your coffee, and try

some of that souffle. What mortal could possibly anticipate disaster when the cook can concoct such a delectable morsel?"

"Gr-r-r-r!" from Doctor Sims, lunging for the saltcellar as it skated away. "Your mental attitude, Martin, always inclines to the flippant and dicacious. Personally, I find the present exuberant actions of the ship most distasteful."

"There goes your water," Doctor Trigg retorted rather unnecessarily, as he held his own glass in one hand and speared souffle with the other.

"Grr-r-r-r-ruh," said Doctor Sims, rising unsteadily. He went to his cabin to get dry clothes, clinging desperately to wall and chairs.

"Isn't he sweet?" said Dulcie.

Doctor Trigg studied her. "My dear, you have given me a new thought," he said seriously. "A perfectly new thought. Sims—sweet—well, well!"

The waiters hurriedly cleared the tables. With growing apprehension, the passengers clustered at the windows to watch the void beyond. Intervals of calm, as they passed the space between two storms, raised false hopes, for they were soon plunged into a roaring madness of elements.

Then, all at once, they were in a maelstrom of elemental fury. Above, below, around them, a gale whined and shrieked. Solid sheets of water buffeted the ship, while flashes of lightning were continuous and so vivid that the control room was bathed in an intense, livid glare. Here, there, and everywhere storms gathered, moved upon the ship, and beat her mercilessly. As the gusts beset her from all sides, she pitched madly.

They were now flying about a mile above the surface of the sea. Mr. Hammond came staggering into the control room and stood near David, but neither spoke.

Ahead of them, mountainous clouds, looking as solid as a wall, rose up as though to block their path. Rain continued to fall in torrents, with hail and snow. The thunder roared, bellowed, and reverberated.

In the salon, the passengers huddled in groups with the stoic acceptance of any situation that is characteristic of the American people. Doctor Sims calmly watched the unbelievable panorama, jotting down an occasional note by the intense glare of the lightning. Dulcie clung close to Doctor Trigg, who, also calm, strove to quiet the girl's natural apprehension with little jokes and whimsical stories.

The majority of the crew were in the hull. The engineers of course were at their posts. Red, sure-footed as a cat, seemed to be everywhere at once. The ship quivered under the lashing of the storm like a live thing. At times she was lifted more than three hundred feet above her course, then plunged in a delirious drop of nearly a thousand feet toward the sea, before she could be steadied. She seemed wrapped in solid sheets of lightning. The duralumin framework was fully charged with electricity, and tongues of electricity were being sprayed away from all edges, points and corners. The cables were glowing with violet light.

David watched anxiously for an opening or "hole" through the sheets of lightning, through which he might contrive to drop down to the possible safety of a lower level. He was determined to make the attempt. Each time that they had been tossed upward, he had found that a worse condition, if possible, existed in the upper altitudes. They were still about a mile above the sea. The din was so great that speech had become impossible. Mr. Hammond, at his elbow, continually indicated a rise; but David had reached the place where, as long as he held the wheel, he would have to follow his own judgment. So he crept

on, watching with strained eyes for a hole in the floor.

Wally, on hands and knees, had managed to reach his cabin, where he cowered, utterly undone. He buckled on a parachute and decided to jump as soon as the ship turned nose down. Suddenly he felt a forward inclination; the ship was certainly tipping. Wally slid and scrambled into the salon.

"Jump! Jump! She's gone!" he croaked hoarsely and, reaching the window, struggled to open it. Like a cat Doctor Sims was upon him, circling him with thin wiry arms and legs. Together they rolled on the floor, and Doctor Sims slapped him smartly on the face. It brought the nearly crazed man back to his senses. They sat up, Wally making no move to escape.

"Why, you amorphous protoplasm!" screamed Doctor Sims. "You congenital moronic microbe! You—you unspeakable NUT!"

It was too much. As Wally slumped, Dulcie hid her face in Doctor Trigg's coat. In the din, a wild burst of laughter became nothing but a series of open mouths and contorted faces. But the tension of terror had snapped.

They had run the gamut of emotions, from the first cold prick of fear to the abandon of terror, and then to the ridiculous explosion.

It was then that David saw a black spot which might be a "hole." Cautiously he turned the trembling ship, and managed to approach it. He found that it was the haven which might save them, and carefully maneuvered her down into the whirling pit. The storm-tossed craft steadied, and with a great sigh of relief David lowered the Moonbeam down and down, into an area of miraculous calm.

Below, the sea had been beaten into a flat surface by the driving rain. Above, the terrible floor of storm-tossed clouds had become a roof, from which hung wisps and threads of mist. A cold, clean, steady wind drove them toward the east. Once more David could hear the beloved, everyday noises of the ship.

They were safe.

Doctor Trigg patted Dulcie, and looked at his watch. "Only four o'clock," he said cheerily.

"Four days!" groaned a reporter.

"That indicates the inadequacy of time as we divide it," said Doctor Trigg. "Eh, Sims?"

"Get up!" growled Doctor Sims, glaring at Wally. "And go to your room!"

Wally, scrambling up, obeyed.

"Twenty lines of Latin is indicated, too, Sims," said Doctor Trigg, chuckling, "but

don't be too hard on the poor boy. His reaction is entirely a matter of temperament."

Doctor Sims rose. "Gr-r-r-r-r!" he retorted, and dusted his knees.

In the control room, David could scarcely realize that the danger was really past. He felt weak and shaken.

"Give me the wheel," said Van Arden's voice, at his side.

"Can you make it?" David asked.

"Surest thing you know!" Van Arden smiled. "I really am all right again, but you must be all in, Ellison. Go along. I'll carry on."

Mr. Hammond took David's arm. "Black coffee is what you need," he said, and led him into the salon.

David rubbed his hands. The fingers were stiffly crooked. He could hardly flex them, they had gripped the wheel so long. Dulcie, calm and collected, appeared from the galley, and sat down opposite him. She took the cup of coffee from the pallid chef, and served it.

"An egg, and some marmalade and toast, I think, Cookie," she said, smiling up into the plump, worried face. "Now, hero, don't talk. Just relax, and get something to eat. Then you are to go to sleep for a week or so. Dad says so."

"Why, I'm all right, Dulcie," declared David. "A little stiff, but that will disappear as soon as I move around."

"Anyway, you are to go to bed. Gee, wasn't that storm a whiz-bang? I was never so thrilled in my life."

"Where were you?" asked David.

"Right close to Doctor Trigg," replied Dulcie. "He was calm as calm!"

"You are a nervy kid," said David, admiringly. "I'm proud of you."

"Well, we are all proud of you," she replied. "Dad says even Captain Fraine could not have done better. To tell you the truth, David, dad feels pretty glum about the way he butted in and ordered you to make altitude. He says that he had put you in charge, and that it was up to him to go by your judgment. And he says that it was lucky for us you dropped to a lower altitude when you did. It probably saved the ship.

"And he says, as long as you did bring us through, he doesn't regret meeting the storm one bit. It only proved the stability and strength of the dirigible. My! By the time those reporters get through writing it up, dirigibles are going to be the whole thing."

"Well, I'm glad the commander isn't sore at me for using my own judgment," said David,

a relieved look on his face. "I just had to do it, Dulcie."

"He isn't; and of course you had to, and he's going to tell you so," said Dulcie. "Oh, there comes the sun! Wonderful, isn't it?"

David turned to the window. Above, the leaden clouds were breaking up and turning to fleece—innocent, pretty masses that looked as though they had been assembled for purely decorative purposes. The first rays of the sun turned them faintly pink, and changed the leaden sea to silver.

Just below them, a big liner, looking like a toy, nosed westward, and as Van Arden gently dropped the ship to a still lower level, the steamer sent three puffs of smoke from her funnels in greeting. No other craft was in sight. As the sun rose, the sparkle and brilliance increased. Already a dull smudge on the horizon revealed itself plainly as the eastern continent. They sped along at an altitude of one thousand feet.

Someone opened a window, and the sweet clean air rushed through the salon. Dulcie buttoned her sweater, and sniffed the air appreciatively as she gazed.

"Doesn't it look happy?" she said.

David, firmly but kindly escorted to his room by Mr. Hammond, slept for two blissful

hours. Then he was awakened by his newly-acquired sense of responsibility, a sense ingrained in the minds of masters of all crafts, either of sea or air. He leaped up, perfectly refreshed, and ready for anything.

Mr. Hammond was sitting by the window.

"I wanted to see you as soon as you waked up, Ellison, so I came back here to get a little rest and quiet, myself. You can't hear yourself think out there in the salon. All the passengers are telling their various experiences during the storm!

"I have arranged to leave Captain Fraine and Lieutenant Florsheim at Friedrichshafen for hospital treatment. They are pretty sick men, Dr. Forsythe says. I had planned to take on someone there to fill Captain Fraine's place but, David, I am convinced that you can do it. After your performance last night, I am positive that you are capable of handling any situation." He rose, his kindly face beaming. "I congratulate you, Captain Ellison. It is a big job, but you will swing it!" He shook hands, and was gone.

David stood staring into limitless space.

"Dad!" he whispered; "are you glad?"

The radio was again in working order, and the operators had sent messages back to Ayre,

and long radiograms were sent to the news syndicates of New York, Berlin, Petrograd, and Tokio by the reporters, each eager to turn in the best story of the storm.

David did not see London. They had passed the ancient city at about six o'clock, while he slept.

"I'm sorry I missed seeing London," David remarked to Dulcie, who wandered into the control room about nine.

"I was asleep, too," said she. "I wanted awfully to see it. I've been reading a book about the Zeppelin during the war. The English used to make London pitch black every night on account of German air raids. They were able to make the city practically invisible, but they could not hide the river Thames. That always gave them away, because the bombers had plans of every important place in the city—churches, public buildings, stations, tanks, magazines, and freight depots—and they could locate them by the river. Then down would come a few tons of bombs."

"Pretty ghastly," said David. He thought of the price he had paid for the war, a price paid by millions, and set his mouth hard. Dulcie studied his face.

"David, did you lose anyone?" she asked. Her voice was so sympathetic, so tender, that

he opened his heart. He could almost feel himself flying with his young and gallant father, as he told her about him, his work, and his death. It was not a long story as David told it. When he finished Dulcie's eyes were misty.

"Oh, David!" she sighed, and impulsively patted his arm. "Your poor, poor mother! But how proud you must be!"

She hadn't pitied him. She had understood.

"I am proud; too proud to broadcast that I'm his son until I can do something worth while, myself."

"As if you hadn't done so, already, you nice modest David! But I won't tell. Not even daddy!"

"Heavens, *no!*" cried David, giving the wheel a twist. "Oh Lord! Dulcie—"

"Oh, shush, silly, as if I would tell! No one is to know. Just you and me—and Red Ryan. Why Ryan, Davie?"

"He guessed it, the darned fox. Nothing I said. He just picked it out of the air. His Irish shrewdness, I suppose. Anyway, he asked me point-blank."

"You like him, don't you, David?"

"I'll say I do!" said David warmly. "He may be rough on the outside, but he's nobody's fool, and smart as a whip, and as loyal as they

make 'em. By the way, where is Cram all this time?"

Dulcie chuckled. "Poor Wally! He's in his stateroom, a very sick man."

"Honestly?" demanded David.

"No, just all in." She leaned close and whispered, "Scared to death, Dr. Forsythe told daddy. I heard him, and daddy shooed me away. So don't breathe it. And see what he says when he comes out."

"You never turned a hair, did you?" admiringly.

Dulcie shrugged. "Why should I? I have no mother, and daddy was here, so what was the difference?"

"What about your other friends?" asked David, with a wide blank gaze.

"What other friends?" she inquired innocently.

"Me," said David, ungrammatically but concisely.

Dulcie blushed; then she chuckled, and pinched David's finger. "Well, Funnyface, you were here too, weren't you?"

"That's more like it," said David, and they both laughed. But somehow a new and closer friendship commenced then.

Mr. Hammond, appearing in the doorway, assumed a scowl.

"Go away, Dulcie," he said, "and let the captain sail the ship. I'd put you in chains where stowaways belong, if only I could find any."

They had passed France; they were over Germany. Radiograms were flying between the ship and Friedrichshafen. All was in readiness there for the welcome of the Moonbeam, and at eleven thirty-five that morning Friedrichshafen lay below them.

Slowly the ship settled over the field. The ground crew of five hundred men seized the ropes and, spreading fanwise, brought the ship down. Mr. Hammond had expected to be moored to the mast, but he saw that preparations had been made to house the ship in the hangar.

As the ground crew, resplendent in their natty blues, drew the Moonbeam down to earth, the watchers saw a large group of magnificently uniformed officers waiting to receive them. Great crowds, held back in orderly masses by soldiers, roared the deep German salute, *"Hoch, Hoch,"* and mingling with it they could hear a goodly volume of American hurrahs, while all over the vast field waved a scattering of small American flags.

Mr. Hammond was enthusiastically received by the burgomaster and a group of the city fathers, as well as by representative officers

from the German army and navy, air service, and government. He found himself shaking hands with his old friend, the American ambassador to Germany. Smiles wreathed every face.

The joyous uproar continued as all the passengers came down the steps from the gondola, but later a sympathetic silence fell as the waiting ambulance backed up and its white-clad attendants disappeared into the ship. Expert hands bore out two stretchers with their swathed forms. Florsheim, sensing the sympathy, got his arm from under the blanket and waved it with a pale grin, while a cheer burst out again, this time not for the ship but for the two injured men being given over to the care of the skilful surgeons for whom Germany is justly noted. When the ambulance had gone, the crowd surged toward the ship.

The best of German mechanics waited to assist the crew of the Moonbeam in grooming her. David, standing at Mr. Hammond's side, felt the good fellowship and sportsmanship which permeated the welcome. The Moonbeam was trying to surpass the record of their own Graf Zeppelin, but there was no resentment.

One ferocious-looking and red-faced general in the Air Corps stared hard at David as

he walked away, then exploded, "And where iss your captain?"

"There is our captain and pilot, general," said Mr. Hammond, bowing.

"Gott in Himmel, he iss a poy, chust a poy! Do you Americans set children, then, to sail your ships?"

"Not quite, general," answered Mr. Hammond, smiling, "but Captain Ellison is one in a million; a genius in his chosen field. We lost the services of our captain and first pilot on the way over. The captain went—well, he became very ill from the effects of an old wound, and the pilot sustained an injury. We are leaving them both here in the hospital.

"A terrific storm was approaching at the time, and I was obliged to put young Ellison in charge. He handled the ship like a veteran. I am convinced that his cleverness and good judgment saved it, in fact, and I have made him captain for the entire flight. I have absolute confidence in him."

"Fine, fine!" exploded the general heartily. "I congratulate you. Good bilots are born, and nod mate. You are luggy."

CHAPTER VIII

THE CRADLE OF THE ZEPPELIN

He watched the retreating back of the young captain under discussion with the wise eyes of a man who can read men.

"Yess, he looks goot," he added.

They were driven to a hotel, and escorted to luxurious rooms.

The lobby was full of young officers, strutting and clanking around. Mr. Hammond and David looked distinguished in their plain, close-fitting blue with black braid and small gold insignia which had been chosen as the ship's uniform. They were both very tall men, well over six feet, the muscles of the younger man making up for the middle-age weight of the older. The Germans regarded them with interest and respect. Certainly they were not to be looked down on, at least! Dulcie, watching them, thought with fury of her own fairylike proportions. How she pined to be a Brunhilde, stalking firmly among all these arrogant-looking young men!

Having changed her frock, Dulcie went to find her father. She found him in his room struggling with a tie, while at the same time he regarded a long, official-looking document on the chiffonier.

"Just look at this, Dulcie." He handed her the paper. "A state luncheon at one-thirty, for a starter, and from then on not a minute that isn't taken up. It's a little better for you, but I bet every last one of these officials has a nice husky wife who will look after you."

"I'll let 'em look for a while, but sometime I am going to play truant. I want to see Friedrichshafen my own way. Isn't it beautiful? And it was here that Count Zeppelin lived, and worked out his plans. I want to learn all about him."

"Yes, you ought to learn all you can about him, Dulcie. Of course, Santos-Dumont was the first one seriously to struggle with the problem of the rigid dirigible, but Count Zeppelin went far ahead of him. Come in!" he added in a roar, as a knock sounded at the door. A bell boy, apple-cheeked and rosy, presented a large tray piled with envelopes.

Mr. Hammond groaned.

"Look 'em over, will you, Dulcie; we only have fifteen minutes, but you are all ready."

Dulcie gave a little laugh. "Why, a lot of

them are for me," she cried, beginning to tear them open. "You were right; they are from the wives. And oh, such high-sounding titles!" She shuffled her notes into a pile. "I'll read them later."

The troublesome tie finally in place, Mr. Hammond put on his coat, smacked down his thick white hair, and they descended to the lounge, where a delegation awaited them.

The burgomaster met them with a long address of welcome, to which all the Germans present listened attentively, as though to show that they approved thoroughly. Dulcie studied their heavy, intelligent faces. Across the weatherbeaten cheeks of a number of the older men ran jagged scars. Newer, livid seams puckered the faces of a couple of the younger officers, brands from Heidelberg duels. Young and old alike stood straight, feet firmly planted, heads proudly poised on their thick necks.

"They are glad they are men, and Germans, and want everybody to know it," thought Dulcie.

The luncheon was a heavy meal, punctuated by heavy speeches and encored by heavy voices barking *"Hoch, hoch!"* appreciatively. Mr. Hammond enjoyed every moment of it. The utterances of those clear, keen, lucid

minds were well worth listening to, especially as he spoke German fluently. Dulcie, also easily conversant with the language, was greatly interested; but David was lost. His French was fairly good, although of the prep-school type, but the guttural polysyllables of the Germans left him gasping.

After the luncheon came a drive, which was in reality a parade designed to show the visitors to the inhabitants of the city. Hundreds of people had come from Berlin and elsewhere to see the great American dirigible, her officers, her crew and her passengers. Every hotel and boarding house was filled to capacity. To the German mind their advent was an educational opportunity which must be followed up.

The procession wound up at the landing field where the visitors were shown all the latest improvements on the German dirigibles. New materials for frame construction, covering, and so forth, all under severe tests of every possible sort.

This airport was the home of the first Zeppelin. It was here that Count Zeppelin spent his time and energy; a wonderful old man, who defied age and went gallantly on, working, planning and constructing, until at last he had the great happiness of tasting success.

They were taken to Count Zeppelin's office,

left as he had used it. The walls were covered with pictures of dirigibles and photographs of engines. Otherwise the room was bare and severe, the room of a man whose whole heart was so entirely in his great work that he found no space for non-essentials. His name is justly revered and honored by every German, and never while a dirigible flies will any country fail to pay homage to his illustrious memory.

That night, after a formal dinner given at the airport in a great banqueting hall, they listened to the Friedrichshafen Choral Society.

Next morning, Dulcie slipped away and explored the city. She was a tireless walker, and her pleasant wanderings took her over miles of clean and charming streets. The business part of the town was lavishly decorated with flags and bunting in their honor. Everyone seemed to move with a snap. There were no loiterers. Robust people did robust work, as though they enjoyed it.

In the outlying parts, an exquisite neatness prevailed. Small, even humble homes, had their patches of lawn and tiny vegetable plots that were as lovely as rose gardens, so beautifully were they laid out and cared for. Every building seemed fresh with paint.

"Even the skies look awfully blue," Dulcie told herself. "Just like the babies' eyes."

Her wanderings were delightful; the people were so friendly. They seemed to know, down to the least little toddler, that the pretty fraulein had come in the beautiful airship, for there were pleasant greetings for her wherever she went. A cheery *"Guten Morgen, Fraulein,"* and as likely as not a posy offered over a fence. When they found that she spoke their own tongue, they would scarcely let her go.

She reached the hotel just in time to prepare for a luncheon given for her by the Friedrichshafen Association of Housewives. She found numbers of stiff and crackly ladies, from bright-eyed old grandmothers proudly wearing the fashions of forty years ago, to demure brides with soft eyes and pleasant voices that almost made the German gutturals pleasing. Dulcie had a good time, and when she took leave of her cordial hostesses was presented with a souvenir. She thought it was a small feather bed, but it was an eiderdown quilt! It was a lusty quilt, fully six inches thick, and covered with intricate patchwork, the handiwork of the energetic grandmothers. Dulcie was completely overcome.

All that afternoon Mr. Hammond and his

staff spent at the landing field, where the Moonbeam was being looked over, inch by inch, by her own crew and the German experts as well.

To the surprise of all, two small holes, not larger than lead pencils, were found piercing the very tip of her nose. Inside, the metal was fused! She had been struck by lightning during the storm. The injury was soon repaired. Oil and gas were shipped, every bag looked over, and every instrument tested for the long flight over the Siberian wastes.

David thrilled at the thought of this part of the flight. It was largely unknown territory, where there was no aid to be had in case of accident. With Red, he himself went over and over the ship, until they knew that she was tuned up to concert pitch.

At five, the party started for Berlin. The city is only forty miles from Friedrichshafen. After a fine dinner with the city officials and a number of officers, they went to the opera, where boxes were reserved for them. David stood in the back of the commander's box, admiring Dulcie from afar. She was completely surrounded by a group of dashing young lieutenants, who were utterly captivated by her beauty and charm.

It was twelve o'clock before the last strains

of Wagner's immortal theme died away, and they were escorted to a supper, after which they drove back to Friedrichshafen, Mr. Hammond and the older of the German officers sleeping quite openly.

Friday was their last day in Friedrichshafen, and Mr. Hammond was himself host at a luncheon. There was great good fellowship, and a loud chorus of German songs. The crew of the Moonbeam had gone to the landing field, where they were eating much food as the guests of the German crews. Directly after Mr. Hammond's luncheon had come to an end, he found a chance to speak to David.

"How much gas did you put on?" he asked.

"Ten thousand feet," said David promptly.

"Did they varnish the propellers?"

"Yes, sir. Everything is in order. We could start in ten minutes if necessary."

"I think we will go shortly after ten. Most of these people whom we know, with a million or so more, want to meet us at the field and say *Auf Wiedersehen,* so we must not go ahead of time."

"We have had a great reception, haven't we?" said David. "To a shy little country boy like me, it has been rather overwhelming."

"Huh!" said Mr. Hammond, "I'm reeling in

my tracks. By the way, when have you seen Florsheim?"

"I was up at the hospital early this morning, and once yesterday. I will go say goodbye before I leave for the field. What rotten luck that was, wasn't it?"

"A mean break," agreed Mr. Hammond.

"I think poor Florsheim feels pretty low over it. He is enough better now to think a little."

"Have you seen Fraine?" asked the commander. "They just let me look in on him after the operation."

"No, I haven't seen him, but it really doesn't matter, because it will be days before he knows anyone. Poor old Fraine! I certainly hope the next time I am captain, there won't have to be a war staged to get me the job."

"I'm sorry about Fraine, and Florsheim, too," said Mr. Hammond, "but it was an accident that might have occurred wherever Fraine had happened to be. And as far as you go, David, well, boy, I am well satisfied with you." He patted David's shoulder in a way that added value to his brief praise.

"Wonder where Dulcie and the professors are," he continued. "I hope they haven't gone off on some jaunt of their own. I clean forgot to tell them that we are going out in a power-

boat to see the lagoons and the coast line. See if you can find them, will you?"

David ran the quarry to earth in the lounge. Doctor Sims had just heard of another very old graveyard some distance from the city, but the others succeeded in persuading him to postpone indefinitely his contemplated pilgrimage thereto, for the lesser pleasure of an afternoon on the water.

The launch was a gorgeous thing, with mahogany planking and silver fittings. It was a calm day, and the water was scarcely broken by a ripple. The launch shot through the water at furious speed, and the young naval officer, whose guest they were, asked Mr. Hammond if he cared to go faster.

"No, I don't think so, thanks. I am rather timid, you see."

A general laugh went up.

"How cruelly the commander must suffer, six thousand feet in the air," laughed the host.

"That's different," said Mr. Hammond, laughing at himself. "There is something so upsetting about this."

They went slower after that, and were able to see the beauties of the sea and shore line.

"This actually makes me want to be a poet," mused Doctor Trigg.

"You are one, dang it!" said Doctor Sims, violently.

"Me? Why, I never wrote a line of poetry in my life!"

"You do worse; you think it. I can feel it stewing around inside of you. If it wasn't for me, Martin, you would just be another nuisance to humanity. But I choke you off—I choke you off!"

"Now that's kind of you, Nicholas, but this scene ought to be excuse enough for anyone. Even you, Nicholas. How does it make you feel? Be honest!"

Doctor Sims reflected.

"Like a normal human being," he said. "Nice day, nice boat, nice scenery, much obliged to our host. Doesn't that cover everything?"

Doctor Trigg laughed heartily. "Sims," he said, "you are a 'gem of purest ray serene'."

"There—you—go!" said Doctor Sims.

"Well," said Dulcie, "it seems to me that you each say the right thing, always."

"Thank you, my dear," said Doctor Trigg.

"Har!" said Doctor Sims.

Long shadows spent themselves across the lagoon as they returned to Friedrichshafen. Mr. Hammond and David, accompanied by their host of the afternoon, were driven at

once to the hospital, where Mr. Hammond gave last instructions for the care of his two officers. Back to the hotel, then, and at seven dinner was served.

The many bells in the city had struck nine before the company rose. Dulcie and David wandered out into the lobby.

"Gold lace," remarked Dulcie, glancing about. "Did you ever see so much of it?"

"Someone told me that there is much less than in the days of the Empire," said David.

"Well, it must have been sewed all over them," sighed Dulcie. "It must be heavy stuff to wear."

"What do those huskies care for a little weight more or less?" demanded David. "Gosh, they are big fellows!"

"They are no larger than you," said Dulcie. "And very little larger than Red, and daddy is taller than a lot of them, but not so thick. Only Wally looks small." She giggled wickedly. "Really, doesn't he look funny? The way he scowls, and stares up at them! But then," she went on gloomily, "look at me! I'm shorter than Wally. See how I have to look up at 'em."

"Yeah; they love it. But at that Wally isn't so short; he's just about a scant average. The rest of us are all so big. Why, when I was a

kid, I used to worry for fear I would be too big to fly."

"Children are funny, aren't they?" agreed Dulcie. "Here's our car; let's go out to the field. I'll tell daddy we have gone."

She leaned back in the car, with a sigh of relaxation.

"It has been wonderful, hasn't it? Surely they won't be half as glad to see us in Tokio. Here, of course, they feel a great interest on account of the Graf Zeppelin. And of course she did blaze the way; we are just beating her time."

"If we can," hedged David. "We mustn't crow. We are three hours behind her time, now."

"We will make it up," said Dulcie, easily. "Oh, David, I have so many cares. I have shipped home all the lovely presents people here have given me, but I can't express the live stock."

"Koko?" asked David.

"Koko! Heavens, no! I wish it was Koko. David, I have two love birds, four German Roller canaries, a kitten, and a marmoset."

"A marmoset!" repeated David. "Why, that's a monkey, isn't it?"

"A very little bit of a one," said Dulcie, groaning. "One of those aviators gave it to

me. He brought it over from Africa one day."

David howled. He laughed so hard that people looked around at *der grosse Amerikaner*, who was making so much noise.

"Oh, won't it be fun when your father sees that menagerie? The air will be just full of love birds, and monkeys, and rolly-canaries, and kittens."

"You are showing a cloven foot," she said. "Don't you like pets?"

David sobered down.

"Truly, I do, and I could be happy forever if I could have a couple of love birds, and some canaries, and a kitten, and you—your marmoset," he added quickly, warned by Dulcie's prim mouth.

"That's better, big boy, and when we get home perhaps I will give you some of them. The marmoset, and maybe my best love—bird! But now," she added, all too briskly, "we'll soon be back on the Moonbeam. I've a lot to do, and there will no doubt be thousands of *tüchtiger* officers, waiting to say *Auf Wiedersehen.*

CHAPTER IX

EASTWARD

Returning to the effulgence of the landing field, they found that preparations were well under way for their departure. David went at once to headquarters, where he was to join Mr. Hammond and the other officers. Dulcie, dodging her *tüchtiger* officers, found Red, and had an earnest talk with him. When they parted, Red was shaking with laughter, and Dulcie, looking as though she was the kitten and had just eaten one of the canaries, went back to find the bereft Germans, all of whom hastened to assure her that they were coming to America immediately.

At last everything was ready, and at one forty-five the ship was walked out of the hangar. Good-byes were said, thanks exchanged, passengers counted and they rose, accompanied by cheers, waving handkerchiefs, and the furious blasts of a brass band. As the Moonbeam gained altitude she was fol-

lowed by a giant spotlight that held her in a dazzling arc of radiance, up, and up, and up until the ray grew dim and was left behind.

Beautiful, bright Friedrichshafen was a memory, and Sunday, the twentieth of June, was over. David found Dulcie writing in the salon, and whispered, "Has he seen 'em yet?"

"Seen what?" asked Dulcie.

"The menagerie, of course."

"Oh, it's gone," said Dulcie, calmly.

"Gone! Gone where?"

"Well, I hated to bother daddy, it's so bad for his digestion; especially after all those German dinners. So I just farmed every one of 'em out. The crew has the marmoset, the reporters have the canaries, Red is taking care of the kitten, and best of all, Doctor Trigg has got the love birds. So it's all fixed. Pretty clever of me, don't you think?"

"Yes, Dulcie," said David as soon as he could stop laughing. "And I'll tell the world I'm learning about women from you."

"Well," said Dulcie reflectively, "I'm not so bad, at that."

All conditions were perfect for flight, and the Moonbeam sailed gently along through the still clear night. David, standing the first watch, was alone but not lonely. Guiding his

ship, planning his future, the "thoughts of youth" were "long, long thoughts," and happy ones.

When Van Arden came to take the wheel, David gave it over reluctantly. He could not sleep. The greatness of their enterprise was growing on him with every hour; all the marvel of it. Behind and over him were human beings; the passengers, officers, and crew, all sleeping serenely and confidently in this immensity of space. Europe was slipping by beneath them. Somehow David discovered that its civilization and its eager interest in their progress was a comfort, a spiritual safeguard. Now, indeed, they were about to fare into a wild and savage country, where there were no hangars, and no materials for repairs. No landing crews would swarm over the Siberian wastes to seize the ropes and ease the stranger to the earth, should she desire to come. Ahead was Russia! The fierce recluse of the world, with her ragged mountains and her endless barren plains.

Long before dawn, David went again to the control room, where he found Mr. Hammond reading the log.

"We passed over Berlin at three-thirty, David," he remarked. "If air conditions re-

main good, and we continue making seventy-five miles an hour, I think we can make up some of our lost time today."

"I'm sure of it," replied David, "especially if the wind stays with us."

Monday dawned. It was a glorious soul-shaking dawn that appeared from nowhere, and without warning drowned the ship in splendor. As David watched, Dulcie came quietly to his side.

"Look, Davie!" she said. "See all those banners of gorgeous color. Don't they look like endless lengths of silk, waving and billowing? And there are little silver ribbons, and all those chiffon clouds. See over there that deep orange and lavender, shading into rose and blue."

"I'll drop down," said David. "Perhaps the earth is all dressed up, too."

Slowly the Moonbeam lost altitude, sinking gently through the riot of color.

"Very dressy indeed," Dulcie commented, as they gazed down at the ordered luxuriance.

"Funny everything over here looks like it had a clean white collar on. Even the woods. And see those farms. See the people waving. I suppose they are shouting, too."

"Look, there's one little speck running for the house," cried Dulcie. "I'll bet they have

a telephone, and he's gone to tell the neighbors in the next village about us. See, there is a group of houses away ahead."

"Quite a little settlement. By George, you are right! Look in the square. See them come? I am going down a bit closer."

They watched, and Dulcie waved madly. Below, the little toy people waved their arms and hats. Even aprons were torn off and brandished. A fat old man bowled about, waving and bowing with an air of authority easily discernible to the amused watchers above. As the ship passed on, children and dogs followed in a losing race.

"Wasn't that fun?" said Dulcie. "You are nice, Davie. It is so understanding of you to know how they feel. That is the thrill that comes once in a lifetime for a lot of those people. And they wanted us to know how glad they were to see us."

"Of course they did, and now they are telephoning ahead to other villages, and getting no end of a kick out of us. I will sail as low as I can, so they can see us plainly. They'll be watching for us all along the way. Do you know, miss, that it is time for breakfast? Where do you suppose the commander is?"

"I'll get him," said Dulcie, "and then we'll eat."

She ran off as Van Arden, giving intangible signs of just having eaten a good meal, came in to take his turn at the wheel.

Mr. Hammond was already eating a substantial breakfast, arguing hotly the while about politics with Wally, who displayed a positive genius for saying infuriating things in an innocent and courteous manner. Mr. Hamilton and his secretary sat by a window, where Mr. Hamilton drank black coffee and ate unbuttered toast while he gazed spellbound at the shifting panorama below. Doctor Sims, at a table by himself, drank strong tea and read a treatise filled with unwholesome looking charts and figures. At a table with Dr. Forsythe and the correspondents, Doctor Trigg sat listening to the rapid fire of wit and slang and mild profanity which flashed from one to the other. They were full of anecdotes of their stay in Friedrichshafen, and the tales did not lose in the telling. But all stopped talking to greet David as he came in.

"'Morning, captain!"

"Hi, captain, what's our next thrill?"

"David, how are you?"

Dulcie smiled. David was liked by everyone. No one could resist his brilliant smile, his thick rumpled hair that never would stay

flat, his tall muscular body with its reassuring look of power. And David's eyes, with their little laugh creases at the corners, were straight and very true.

He came in, greeting everyone at once with a manner which made each one feel that the pleasant word was especially his. It was characteristic that he noticed Doctor Sims sitting alone, and took a place at his table.

The doctor responded to David's pleasant good-morning with a growl which was almost cheerful. Doctor Trigg and the star reporter, a keen-looking, gray-haired man, soon joined them. Doctor Sims closed his book with a baffled air. He never got enough time for research work, and he laid most of his interruptions to Doctor Trigg. Drat the man; he was always close by, ready to chat. Chat—who wanted to chat? What if they had been classmates in the long ago, and co-educators ever since? Why, by all the test tubes in the world, should a man as learned and profound as was Doctor Trigg in his chosen sphere, why should he want to chat?

Doctor Sims did not wait. He leaped upon his quarry.

"Yar-r-r-r-r-r," he quoth forcibly. "Yar-r-r, Martin! What is your latest discovery this morning? More enthusiasm? More youth-

ful prodigies, or more astonishing propensities? Let's hear 'em, and get it over with."

"Why, no, Sims, I can't say that I have anything profound or of specific value to offer for your consideration today."

"How did you like Friedrichshafen, Doctor Sims?" asked the star reporter. He was a friendly man.

"Wonderful, wonderful!" said Doctor Sims. "I ransacked the city and miles of its environs. I found rich returns for my labor."

"He's a collector," explained Doctor Trigg to the reporter.

"Epitaphs," added Doctor Sims proudly.

"Ep—" said the reporter, and stopped.

"Precisely," said Doctor Trigg. "Ep-itaphs. On monuments, you know:

'Here lieth the body of Israel Jones,
Till Judgment Day shall uncover his bones'."

"A very poor imitative effort on your part," said Doctor Sims caustically.

"It was just a sort of sample," Doctor Trigg defended his effort. "I will be willing to wager one of these excellent doughnuts that these young men, collectively, have never read six epitaphs in their lives."

"I haven't," confessed David, his sunny smile full on Doctor Sims' gloomy countenance. "I bet they are interesting. You could

sure get a kick out of some of them. Like collecting stamps."

"Much more enthralling, much more appealing." Doctor Sims pushed back his teacup and book. "It's like this: Paleontologists have found that from the most remote antiquity—"

Doctor Trigg interrupted. "Nicholas," he said, "it is a pity to embark on a subject of such widespread interest at so inauspicious a moment, when you will certainly be obliged to discontinue your discourse before you have voiced a tenth of your thesis. Let me advise you to reserve your dissertation for a time when these young men will have finished their duties and be free to assure you a couple of hours of uninterrupted attention."

He looked solemnly at the reporter, who looked solemnly back.

"That would be better, doctor, if you don't mind. I'd hate to miss it, and I've got to dash off pretty soon, and make out my reports."

Doctor Sims looked almost pleased. "All right, all right, and I will get my recent additions transcribed and cataloged, and the snapshots developed."

"Just where are we, captain?" asked Doctor Trigg, hastily taking up a new subject.

David explained. "We must be approaching

the border of Russia, now," he added. They crowded to the window.

"What wonderful scenery!" exclaimed the star reporter. "It is growing much wilder and more rugged. Even those plains over there look harsh, and cold."

They watched a gradual change take place and about ten o'clock they saw ahead a city which they knew must be Tilsit, East Prussia. They dipped low, and went slowly over it, while the populace surged out of buildings in black masses. They had been heralded by telegram and radio, and cheers went up, and flags were waved. When they hung over the public square, they dropped a bundle of post-cards. Dulcie, hoping some child would pick it up, dropped a handkerchief with an American quarter tied in the corner.

Winds continued favorable, even and strong, and due east. They were now going seventy-five miles an hour, and were gradually making up some of the time lost in the storm over the Atlantic. All conditions seemed so kindly that David actually felt nervous. He watched the instruments, and tested the feel of the wheel every few minutes.

Luncheon came and went.

At about two o'clock, when the passengers

were enjoying the passing view, someone exclaimed, "City ahead!"

"It is Dvinsk," said Mr. Hammond. "Friends, we are now crossing the Soviet frontier." He stood watching until the city, some miles to the right, had disappeared.

"We are in Russia," he continued. "Leningrad and Moscow are ahead, but our course lies between them. Viatka is directly in our line of flight, about six hundred miles east of Moscow."

David, still impressed by the size and loneliness of the country they were entering, slipped on an overall, and went up the ladder leading into the hull. He gained the catwalk, and made his cautious way along the narrow foothold that ran the entire length of the hull.

Reaching the end of the walk, David looked over the intakes of the fuel and water lines, which entered there. Everything was in perfect shape. He went back, and looked into the baggage room and then into the storage rooms for the cartridge-like cases of fuel gas.

Then he went down to Red's cabin. Red was writing postcards, aided and abetted by the kitten.

"Hello, fella!" he cried. "Come up to see me cat? Ain't he a beaut? You can tell he's a cat at first glance, small as he is. Now a

pup at that age might turn into anything between a dachshund and a Great Dane. Those seem to be the most popular breeds in this country. But a cat—well, a cat's a regular cat from its first breath. Just a soft bundle of mews, and scratches, and devilment.

"Did Miss Hammond tell you, now, about how those little German bands gave her a menagerie? She farmed 'em all out on us. I think she's partial to me, Dave, because she gave me the kitten. I suggested lettin' Wally take care of the bit of a monkey, but she said she wouldn't 'trust to his finer feelings'. She didn't make it clear whose she meant; just twinkled those devastatin' eyes at me, and walked off, leavin' me with this bit of fur. I've named him Trouble. He cries in a loud voice when I leave him, and I daren't let him out for a second. Imagine those claws sprinting up a gas bag. So I spend most of my idle moments here, just to hearten him. But if you want fun, go see the crew and their share of the menagerie."

"Well, Mr. Hammond will inspect around here some fine day, and then we will be in wrong," warned David.

"Not a bit! Just the first roar, and Miss Dulcie will slip up the way she does, and she will say, 'Why, they are mine, daddy, and

these nice men are keeping them for me,' and I'll bet we will each get a medal."

"Likely to be that way," said David, laughing. "Do you see much of Cram lately?"

"Not so much. He sort of keeps to himself. I cross his path every little while. Gosh, Davie, the truth is I'm tryin' to keep from giving him a sock." Red sighed. "He's my one bad dream."

"I don't see why you take him so hard," said David. "You sound as though he had grabbed off your best girl."

"Oh, of course he did that," admitted Red easily. "With their first oil well. But that's nothing. I always manage to have a few spares. It's nothing like that. He did other things. Well, I won't hit him unless he harms you, David, really tries to do you dirt. It's the nasty way he has of sayin' things that makes him dangerous. Not so much the things he says, but the way he says 'em." Red shrugged his shoulders as though to rid himself of an unpleasant subject. "Say, how's your little gadget comin' on these days?"

David's face lighted.

"It's finished, Red, as far as it can be without a working model. You know, I feel as though I had stumbled on something darned good. Gee, I hope it wins that school prize.

Ten thousand dollars! Sounds good, doesn't it?"

"Good enough," said Red, "but none too good. You know I've a sense for engines, and everything that concerns them and I'm telling you, you've got a great thing there."

"I think so, Red. I'm like you; I feel pretty sure of it. I didn't have that feeling for any of the other things I rigged up. I didn't seem to have much interest in them, though they worked. You know, they are using a couple of them back at the plant, right now. But this is different. From the minute the principle of the thing flashed into my mind, I liked it. And think what it would mean to dirigible transportation!"

"I'll say! It ought to increase the average speed of a dirigible fifteen to twenty per cent."

"If it works," hedged David cautiously.

"Oh, it'll work! If we hadn't come on this trip you could have tried it out before this, couldn't you?"

"It will keep, and there will be plenty of time. It could be made in twenty-four hours, if necessary," said David.

"Well, don't let anything happen to the plans, and keep them under your hat," advised Red.

"You bet," said David. "Do you know that we are over Russia now?"

"Yeah! We crossed the frontier while I was down in an egg looking at an engine. One of those engineers is bugs on geography, and he spouted enough facts about Russia to fill a book. I'll say they have some mad looking country, haven't they? But not many people so far. Towns kind of scattered."

"Wait a day or two," David prophesied. "I have a hunch that this is Central Park to what's ahead. Can you leave the cat long enough to look things over a bit?"

Red assented, and felt exploringly under his pillow. He brought out a small can.

"God help me, I even have to steal condensed cream for me cat!" he said.

Monday evening passed uneventfully. During the night the Moonbeam encountered a skirmish of winds which she rode so evenly that there was scarcely any discomfort on the ship. The instruments, however, as well as radio reports from Irkutsk, Chita, and Chabarovsk in Siberia warned them of thick and uncertain weather ahead.

Viatka was passed at ten minutes after ten Tuesday morning; and with daylight appeared the grim, austere peaks of the Ural Mountains. As the light became clearer, the

mountains emerged from their enveloping fogs and reared their bleak monstrous crests as though reaching for the passing ship. The panorama was of surpassing grandeur. At ten-thirty they sailed over the city of Kisel. Here they approached as low as was safe, and dropped several sacks of mail.

Cold biting winds from the Arctic buffeted them. Overcoats, sweaters and mufflers appeared, but the elements could not keep the awed sightseers from the windows, where they watched the slow march of the Titans below. Their speed was reduced for safety's sake here, for the winds were more and more uncertain. The mountains covered a vast space, but the general trend of the range was northeast, the direction that the Moonbeam was gradually following. About the base of the mountains were dark blots of forests, but they covered little of the great areas, bald, repellent, and threatening, that looked from the ship as though carved of solid stone.

They passed several tiny hamlets. To their surprise, the inhabitants observed the ship with unfeigned terror. They left their huts, looked, and one and all took refuge in the surrounding woods. With the glasses it was easy to see their terror as they fled, mothers

carrying babies, and small children being dragged ruthlessly away to safety by agitated fathers.

"What fools!" said Wally to Dulcie.

"I don't think so at all," she replied hotly. "I suppose in their place you would know all about us by instinct? I am just as sorry for them as I can be."

The squally winds over the mountains were beginning to be very apparent. They could feel the Moonbeam struggle against the intermittent gusts. Later the wind settled into a steady gale. The five great engines were doing their utmost, but the ship hung in the air as though anchored. David raised her to a higher altitude, but at three thousand feet above the mountains the wind still tore with a velocity against which they could make no headway. He dropped back and tried a southerly direction, but met with heavy squalls. Resuming their first course, he held the Moonbeam steady, her nose to the blast. Finally the wind, while keeping its intensity, began to come in gusts. Between them, David worked the ship north, turning nose on when the hurricane redoubled its fury. Slowly, with infinite care and patience, he maneuvered the ship high above the rough mountains, until he saw the plains far below.

With the stone peaks of the mountains past, he dropped down to two thousand feet, where he found comparatively smooth sailing. Working his way, he steered the Moonbeam at an angle which brought her into the course she had left hours before. The wind still blew hard, but the ship again made headway against it.

As they proceeded into lower country, plains appeared, many of them dotted over with clusters of lakes, some vast in size, others tiny pools. It was bitterly cold. They were well north of sixty degrees latitude, which runs just south of Seward, Alaska. During the night they touched the Arctic Circle.

CHAPTER X

BANZAI!

As the mountains flattened out, the ragged plains seemed to stretch in inconceivable distances. Dense uncharted forests blanketed the land. Two forest fires were raging in this district, about fifty miles apart. Heavy masses of smoke hung over them, or were torn into shreds and hurried away by the high wind. Bursts of flames reddened the smoke, and licked greedily upward.

When Dulcie went to bed, she experienced the ever-recurring thrill to find herself in a luxurious stateroom, far above the earth. The rarefied clean air made her body tingle. Dulcie thought shudderingly of her narrow escape from being left behind.

"It only goes to show," she told herself, "that occasionally one has to act."

The following morning, Wednesday, after breakfast, Doctor Trigg and Doctor Sims stood gazing at the waste below them. "End-

less, arid plains," said Dr. Trigg. "Russia—Siberia—the steppes—"

"I wonder just where we are," said Dulcie, suddenly bobbing up at the window under Doctor Sims' arm. He removed the arm.

"I believe we are about seven hundred and fifty miles west of Yakutsk," said Mr. Hamilton, speaking from his usual place at the desk.

"Is that a city?" asked Dulcie.

"Yakutsk," said Doctor Trigg, "is the principal city of the Lena Gold Fields, and lies over the Stanovoi Range, toward the western end of the Sea of Okhotsk. In this part of Siberia lie the vast gold fields known as the Russian Klondike. They produce, with incredible hardship and labor, over two hundred million rubles annually. A ruble," he added, rolling an affectionate and whimsical eye at Dulcie, "is at present worth—hum—let me think—"

"About fifty cents," said Mr. Hamilton promptly.

"Yes," continued Doctor Trigg. "This bleak and terrible country, stretching on, desolate league after desolate league, has been unofficially the death chamber of thousands of political and criminal prisoners every year. Herded together, the lowest and highest, in horrible proximity, sometimes in chains, the

poor wretches are sent here from civilization to work the mines for a ruthless State, to labor, suffer, and die. Often the keenest, cleverest intellectual, whose only crime was a chance word, misstated by some jealous contemporary, is chain-mate to the vilest wretch crawling. No redress, no pardon. The poet Shelley pictures Prometheus chained to a rock, the fox gnawing at his vitals, and Prometheus groans,

> 'No rest, no change, no hope;
> Yet I endure.' "

"Yes, conditions are said to be pretty bad," mused Mr. Hamilton. "And this is called the storehouse of the world."

"True," said Doctor Trigg. "The mountains contain not only gold, copper and iron, but ninety-five per cent of all the platinum in the world. For you, little Dulcie, and for millions like you, for that delicate chain on your neck, and that pretty ring."

"Costly enough," added Doctor Sims gloomily.

"There are jewels to hang on your platinum chains, too. Stores of tourmalines, chrysoberyls, and lovely pale aquamarines hide in the Urals."

"And the endless trickle of bloodstained gold and gems seeps slowly out, year after

year and generation after generation, to trick and beautify and amuse the world," said Doctor Sims. "Gr-r-r-r-r!"

"History repeats itself forever," said Mr. Hamilton.

"There are other riches, too," Doctor Trigg went on. "North of us, as I make out our present position, lie vast deposits of unmined oil. Whole lakes of it have escaped from the earth, and have spread over acres of sodden ground."

"Hmmm," said Wally. "Something ought to be done about that, if it's so."

"It is not officially substantiated," said Doctor Trigg, "but an old student of mine, who turned out to be a globe-trotter, told me that he had actually seen several of those lakes of oil. He said they were a remarkable sight. He made various tests, and reported that the oil in Siberia seems practically limitless."

"Well, we will need that oil some day," said Mr. Hamilton. "Question is, what will we have to pay for it?"

"Gr-r-r-r-r," said Doctor Sims. "Before that time comes, the face of civilization will have assumed some new grimace, and the question will answer itself."

"Well, it's a perfectly horrid country," declared Dulcie.

"Yes, yet lonely and savage and remote as it is, it has contrived to paint a few garish pictures on the page of time. Look at the Gobi Desert, far south of us. Read of Marco Polo's journeys there; his terrific adventures, about the year 1272, when—"

"Marco Polo," interrupted Doctor Sims. "Why go back to Marco Polo for interest? Think of our own Roy Chapman Andrews, and what he has discovered there. Think of those dinosaur eggs! The Peking Man!"

"I read about those," said Dulcie brightly. "But do you know what we have done? We have talked and talked all morning. Here comes luncheon. Oh, Doctor Trigg, you simply know everything!"

"Gar—yah!" said Doctor Sims, cryptically.

Doctor Trigg looked at him over his glasses.

"I should know almost everything, my dear," he agreed. "You see, I have been closely associated with Doctor Sims here for forty years, and having a retentive memory, I have been able to collect and assimilate a vast amount of information."

"Chops," said Doctor Sims to the waiter.

The wind was lessening, and the Moonbeam was steadily picking up speed. At seven o'clock that evening they passed within thirty miles of Yakutsk, lying toward the southwest.

The evening went gaily. Dulcie brought out her mandolin, and the youngest reporter confessed to a guitar. There was singing, too, and Doctor Trigg surprised everyone with a knowledge of the words of about every college song ever written. He sang them, too, in a lusty, wabbly old voice, happily oblivious of Doctor Sims' "Ha's," "Humphs" and "Gr-r-r-r-rs."

At two the next morning, Thursday, they reached the Port of Ayan, on the Sea of Okhotsk. They had safely gained the eastern coast of Asia. At breakfast that morning, Mr. Hammond was elated.

"We have made up all the time we lost in the storm over the Atlantic, in spite of the winds over the Urals," he exclaimed. "We will surely make a lot crossing the Pacific—eight hours, at least, if we have good weather, and another two crossing the United States will put us in Lakehurst eight hours ahead of the flying time of the Graf Zeppelin."

David shook his head.

"I hate to have the chief set his heart on such a record," he said to Red, as they later went forward to the control room. "You know we won't have that much luck."

"If we do, it sure will be luck," said Red, skeptically.

The passengers seemed rather glad to leave the trans-Siberian part of the flight behind them, although it had been a wonderful experience.

When Dulcie succeeded in cornering her father, she declared that Davie was growing very thin. She rebuked her parent for the amount of responsibility he had placed on David's shoulders. Finally he replied:

"Look here, little gadfly, if you will stop buzzing for a while, I will explain my methods. This young David Ellison is rather better than the average, ("Much," said Dulcie.) and he has a good mind; an excellent mind. ("A perfectly wonderful mind," muttered Dulcie.) He's a splendid type of the young American, ("Um," said Dulcie.) and I want to see if he has the stuff in him that I think he has. If it's there, Dulcie, I mean to give him a helping hand."

"Atta boy, daddy!" cried Dulcie. "He has got brains. Has he said anything to you about the invention he is working on?"

"Not a word; what is it?"

"He doesn't want anyone to know about it, and I'm not to breathe a word even to you, but it is something about something to fasten on the engines that will make them do something or other a great deal better than they

are doing it now, and all that. It is marvelously important, and I'm not to mention it to a soul."

"I wouldn't. Some unscrupulous person, hearing you talk about it, might jot the whole thing down and get a patent on it. In the meantime, to go back, I won't be able to find out what stuff he's made of unless I work him like the devil. So keep your finger out of this pie, Miss Hammond. The young man is not your type, anyhow."

"What is my type, then?" asked Dulcie, curiously.

"Well, there's Cram."

"Daddy," cried Dulcie, stamping, "I can't bear the sight of him!"

"Can't bear—well, what were you doing the other night when I came in to the salon, and found you at that corner table, holding his hand, and Cram smirking and blinking at you like a hound pup?"

Dulcie giggled. "I was reading his palm. I told him he would have a very distinguished career, and would probably fill some high public office. I said I thought he would be an ambassador."

"Ambassador, my eye!" he growled. "What do you do it for, anyway, Dulcie, smearing it on like that?"

"They expect it. If you don't kid 'em along they don't know how to talk at all."

"Well, we will hope for the best," said Mr. Hammond, and added, as he left her, "Go vamp Doctor Sims. If you can get one real compliment out of him before we reach Ayre, I'll buy you a new roadster."

"Darling!" cried Dulcie, making a dash for her parent. But he shut the door hastily, and was gone.

Mr. Hammond went to the chart room, studied the maps, then joined David in the control room.

"Well, it won't be long now, before we are over Japan," he remarked. "We will probably spend two days there at the airport, for a good overhauling."

"There are some recent radiograms in that clip, commander. I see that they are planning a regular blow-out for us."

Mr. Hammond commenced looking over the pile of radiograms which David had indicated.

"Well, well!" he exclaimed. "They have arranged for six expert engineers to meet us and take care of the ship. Two Americans, two Germans, and two Japanese. That is certainly doing things up right. And there is a ground crew of five hundred Japanese sailors, specially trained. Just what they did

for the Graf Zeppelin. They want to know just when to expect us. Here are advance greetings from all their princes, highest ranking army and navy officers, and state officials." He sighed. "Well, captain, it does look like a big reception."

There was a thrill of excitement on the ship. Everyone was conscious of it. After the days spent crossing Siberia, the thought of disembarkation in beautiful, alluring Japan was delightful. The reporters clicked their little portables in a chorus which sounded like hail. There was much joking and laughter. Doctor Trigg practiced sentences out of a Japanese-English phrase book. Doctor Sims, who had once been in Tokio, knew of an obscure little burial-place that he meant to visit.

At three-thirty o'clock, on Thursday afternoon, they passed over Mororan, on the island of Kokkaiddo, Japan. They were now only five hundred and fifty miles from Tokio.

While the Moonbeam sped toward the city, her five engines roaring out their rhythmic chorus, there was bustle and excitement in Tokio. Another great ship, larger by far than the Graf Zeppelin, was to be the guest of Japan. The city was in gala dress. From the highest official, dignified and unapproachable,

down to the tiniest little Geisha girl, chattering behind her fan, the population of Tokio united in a charming spirit of welcome. Every hotel in the city was crowded with tourists, come to see the ship. The veteran Commander of Communications, with Mr. Hammond's message of acceptance of the entertainments planned by the city officers, proceeded with his elaborate arrangements. Special trains waited at the Tokio station to transport the two thousand invited guests to the naval landing field at Kasumigaura, about forty miles northwest of the city, where an arm of the Pacific forms placid lagoons.

Every hour special weather reports were wirelessed to the ship, while six seaplanes were ordered to meet her at sea and escort her in. The great hangar had been cleared for the reception of the visitor, the Japanese ships being transferred to another location.

Kasumigaura was not housing an American ship for the first time. It had been used on a previous successful round-the-world flight of three army planes in 1924, but the American aviators had flown in the opposite direction, with a more southerly general course.

All Thursday morning a distinguished group of Japanese watched the five hundred bluejackets who comprised the special ground

crew as they rehearsed for their coming task. There was the admiral, the minister of the navy, the vice admiral, and, besides, two princes of the reigning house. The ground crew used the largest of the Japanese dirigibles for their maneuvers.

The weather was hot, but beautiful and clear. All nature seemed in league to show Japan at its loveliest. At Tokio, as the morning passed, thousands of tireless eyes searched the sky for the first sight of their splendid visitor. Afternoon came, and dragged by, and still the masses of people watched and listened for the siren which was to sound the tidings of her arrival. Newsboys swarmed everywhere, with extras containing the latest reports of the ship's location.

Evening came. Nine o'clock; fifteen minutes past; and then—three long blasts from the city's sirens sent men, women and children rushing for vantage points. Traffic came spontaneously to an end.

She had come; the silver ship, the Moonbeam! Her engines roaring, her silver gray sides gleaming in the searchlights, she appeared suddenly as she dropped through a floor of mist, and hung so low over the city that it was easy to see the passengers crowded at the windows of the cabin. The usual calm

of the Japanese disappeared, and wild shouts of *"Banzai!"* rent the air. Handkerchiefs waved madly.

The Moonbeam hung low over the city, as though waiting to receive the homage due her. Then graciously she circled, and crossing the center of the city, sailed across to Yokohama, where she saluted the outgoing steamers which were awaiting her there.

Then she turned in the direction of Kasumigaura. Reaching the port, she made a wide circle, her attendant seaplanes following, then descended. The ground crew rushed to their places, and with perfect precision the Moonbeam was drawn down and secured.

The crowd, composed of many nationalities, became wildly excited. The noise continued while the passengers disembarked. Mr. Hammond and David were immediately surrounded by a group of bemedalled and gold-laced officials. Their luggage was put in cars which were to take them to Tokio, where rooms were reserved for all the passengers and officers at the Imperial Hotel. Dulcie clung close to Doctor Trigg, with Red Ryan as a bulwark on the other side, and Cram close in the rear. Soldiers and policemen tried to hold back the masses of people who seemed to gather in increasing numbers. Repeatedly

the laughing, chattering mobs broke through the cordons, only to be pressed back.

A large automobile swept up to Dulcie and her escorts, and a Japanese officer motioned that they were to enter. When they were comfortably seated, and the door shut, the smiling Oriental bowed and the car rolled smoothly away in the direction of Tokio.

The great yellow moon came lazily out of the sea, and lanterns twinkled merrily as they sped along.

"Well, Lafayette, here we are!" said Dulcie, leaning back on the luxurious cushions. "This is certainly a dandy car. Red, I feel a grand good time coming on."

"You betcha, Miss Hammond!"

"I don't like these Japs," said Wally, turning around on the front seat, where he sat beside the chauffeur. "They are two-faced, and undependable. Wouldn't trust one an inch."

"Keep still!" Dulcie cried imperiously. "That man may speak English. Anyway, I don't believe one word of it."

Wally subsided into sulky silence. The little man at the wheel did not flicker an eyelid. Dulcie decided that he had not understood.

"Did you notice the charming little incident back there when our friend closed the door?"

asked Doctor Trigg delightedly. "Knowledge is indeed power!" He tapped the little Japanese-English phrase book in his hand. "I had the pleasure of speaking to the young man in his native tongue. I wish you had noticed the surprise and interest depicted on his countenance. He seemed scarcely able to believe his ears. I am rather an old man to attempt the mastery of a new tongue."

"What did you say, doctor?" asked Dulcie.

He stared uncertainly at the little book.

"I would refresh my memory, but the light is so bad. Can you read it? It is the first line on the left-hand page."

Dulcie snapped on the dome light, and looked. She could well imagine the amazement of the young Japanese!

"You have stolen the rice of my honorable father," was the translation beneath the phonetic pronunciation. She closed the book hastily.

"I think you are just too smart for words, doctor," she said.

CHAPTER XI

A STUDENT PRINCE

The Imperial Hotel afforded the travelers every conceivable luxury, perfect service, and cosmopolitan meals. Dulcie found her room a bower of flowers. She had her personal maid, a demure, slant-eyed little thing. Little Kamani did not seem to sense any handicap in the fact that neither could speak the other's language. Smiles made easy contact.

Very early the following morning, the lobby was filled with important-looking Japanese, all in immaculate European clothes. Only in their homes, or on very special state occasions, do the modern Japanese wear the beautiful kimonas of the old regime. Many of the men present were members of the Imperial household.

As Dulcie stood talking to Doctor Trigg, Wally joined them.

"Well, Dulcie, how do you like this crazy country? The people—aren't they a riot?

And they take themselves so seriously, too."

"Keep still, Wally!" said Dulcie, hotly. "I think you are perfectly inexcusable, the way you air your views."

"They don't understand," said Wally carelessly. "Sort of half-witted, anyhow."

At that moment a young Japanese who was standing directly behind Wally turned to look at him. As he did so, he saw Doctor Trigg. A look of amazement flickered across his placid countenance. He stepped quickly around the group, and with an apologetic bow to Dulcie, hastened to the doctor with outstretched hands.

"Doctor Trigg!" he exclaimed in fluent English. "Well, well, what do you think of this? Fortune attends me!" He shook the doctor's hands, and almost embraced him. "Surely you remember me?"

"I most certainly do," exclaimed Doctor Trigg. "Well, my dear boy, this certainly is a delightful reunion. Of course I haven't forgotten you!" He turned to Dulcie. "Let me present to you one of my old and most promising students." He hesitated. "What's your title over here, Hata? Prince, I believe?"

The Prince bowed deeply to Dulcie.

"Mr. Cram, Prince Hata."

Again the Prince bowed; but this time it

was a haughty salutation, and his black eyes regarded the smiling countenance before him curiously. He turned abruptly to Doctor Trigg.

"You came in the Moonbeam, I take it, sir. How delightful! I have already paid compliments of day to your distinguished young captain. Do please consider yourself most particularly my guest during your stay; and Miss Hammond, if she will be so gracious, must meet my honored mother and my sisters. And you must see something of our Tokio; not this make-believe Paris, but the old city. For it still exists, hidden away. And I have a million questions to ask you, Doctor Trigg, about Princeton."

"Doctor Sims is in the party, too," said the professor.

"Truly, this is the happy day of fulfilled desires!" exclaimed the Prince.

Wally broke into the conversation. Here was a prince! He had heard that the Japanese nobility were very exclusive. What an incident to tell back home! Doc calling him "my dear boy," too, and patting him on the back. It was time he asserted himself.

"I'm a Princeton man, too," he said, smiling ingratiatingly.

Prince Hata looked at him pleasantly. His

face did not change, his voice when he spoke was gentle and courteous.

"Indeed!" he said, but Wally felt as though a sizable pail of ice water had been dumped over him.

"Where is the dear doctor?" Hata asked, turning to the older man. "Does he still roar horribly? Such a bluff! And does he still collect—what is it? Oh, yes, epitaphs. I will make him very happy. We have some wonderful ones near the temple on my father's estate. Shall we go and find him?" He turned, and they started out. Wally pressed close to the young nobleman, but at the door Hata faced him, and bowed.

"Good-bye," he said distinctly. "It may be that we shall meet again." He turned and joined the others, who had gone forward.

Walter Cram gazed after the trim, dignified little figure. He felt the hot flush of mortification in his face. The darned Jap! he had heard every word he had said in the lobby. He wondered if the chauffeur of the night before had also understood English. There was the big car waiting at the curb. Wally's curiosity drove him on. He crossed the sidewalk and spoke to the driver.

"Are you detailed to look after our party today?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, for the duration of your stay," came the instant answer in perfect English.

Wally turned and went into the hotel. He found his way to the men's lounge, and to a big wing chair in a corner. There he sat and thought, cursing himself for his breaks.

Prince Hata and the two old men talked of the days, only two or three years back, when Hata had been at Princeton. It had not occurred to either of them that they might see this former pupil, and here they were, walking slowly up and down, arm in arm. But here the two who had been teachers, and therefore in authority, were the guests, and Hata, talking fast, was planning all sorts of wonderful entertainments for them.

Prince Hata and his two old teachers started gaily off to look at temples and jade and epitaphs. Hata had even remembered epitaphs! They would have a grand time, and it was easy to see that Prince Hata was hungry to hear all about Princeton.

Dulcie found her father and David in close consultation in the reading room, while near the door half a dozen Japanese officers waited patiently for the conversation to end. This was no place for Dulcie. She went down to the lobby again and found Red, scarcely recognizable in white suit and shoes, his cop-

pery hair painstakingly flat, his eyes bluer than ever.

"Well, I certainly am glad to see you!" Dulcie exclaimed, dragging him toward two big chairs in a corner. "Such a time!" and she told him about Wally and the Prince.

"Honestly, Miss Hammond, that lad makes me just sick with disgust, but what can be done? There's no chance to lock him up, and there's no use warnin' him to keep a civil tongue in his head, because he just don't know when he's insultin'. Gosh, what do you suppose he said and did at Friedrichshafen, when no one was with him? I dunno, but I bet it was awful. And he speaks good German, so he could make all his friendly comments as clear as sea-water, and as bitter."

"Well, I'm too ashamed for words," said Dulcie. "Last night in the car I know that chauffeur understood what he said. These people are so perfectly and beautifully polite; so gentle, and self-effacing, and yet so efficient. You must meet Prince Hata, Red. He simply oozes aristocracy, yet Doctor Trigg hugged him and called him his dear boy, and now he's taken them off to find old jade and tombstones. And that man last night who put us in the car. He never smiled when dear Doctor Trigg spouted his Japanese at him.

He was so proud of his Japanese and, Red, he had looked at the wrong line in the book! He thought he said 'Good-night, and thank you', but he had said, 'You have stolen the rice of my father'!"

"God love him!" cried Red, after a shout of laughter. "He said that, did he?"

"Yes, and the man just smiled politely and bowed."

"Well, Wally is just the cross we'll have to bear, Miss Hammond."

"We won't worry over him, at any rate," Dulcie replied. "I've a grand morning ahead of me. I'm going to take Kamani, my little maid, and an interpreter, and lots of money, and we are going shopping. Imagine it! Shopping in Tokio!"

"It looks just like New York to me," said Red, "except for the people."

"Not where we are going. We are going to explore. Here they come now. Good-bye!"

"Good luck!" said Red. He went off to find David, and met him coming down the grand staircase.

"How about a drive, Red?" he called as soon as he caught sight of him. "I'm free for the rest of the morning, and we might see something of the city."

"Fine!" agreed Red. "I believe that the car

that brought Miss Hammond and the professors in last night is assigned to us."

"Good!" cried David.

They located the car, and found the same young driver at the wheel.

"You speak English, of course?" David said, his candid eyes smiling.

"Yess, sir."

"I thought so," David said. "Well, how about a drive this morning? We are crazy to see the city, and I bet you can tell us all about it."

"It will be to me a great happiness," the young Japanese answered.

"Come on then, Red; we're off!" They hopped in and the car started smoothly away.

A short distance from the hotel, their driver called to a youth who was standing at the curb. They conversed in a chopped sibilant jargon, then the driver asked permission to take on another driver, so that he himself might be free to designate and explain points of interest.

"Of course," said David. "And you had better come over in back so you won't have to shout."

He came readily enough and sat on one of the little folding seats, with many apologies for occupying a place in front of them.

Then began such a story of Japan and of Tokio that the past lived and the present blossomed for them. The Japanese, he said, had never been a roving people. They did not live by conquest. Japan's rulers are well beloved, guiding their industrious subjects with kindly wisdom, as they forge ahead in agriculture and the arts on a high plane of civilization. Centuries ago, while all the rest of the world was new and racked by conflict, civil and foreign, the Japanese were taught to read and write.

They drove through miles of streets as modern as the newest of American cities. Block after block of beautiful office buildings and shops with great windows full of the most up-to-date gowns and Paris ties, socks, and shirts. Snappy gloves laid over correct walking sticks that would have been a credit to the most exclusive Fifth Avenue shop. There were magnificent banks; and movie houses everywhere.

"How big is this place, anyhow?" Red demanded at length.

"They say it is a good bit bigger than Philadelphia," said David. "And Philly is some town, you know."

It was strange indeed to see on all sides such perfect order and co-operation in a land so crowded that it was impossible to spare room

for the domestic animals, the horses and cows so common to the rest of the world.

Their guide dwelt upon the thousands of students, men and women, who had gone abroad to be educated, and to absorb new and advanced ideas, until Japan in her stupendous mental growth had supplied her people with universities and technical schools of their own. He showed them silkworms on their trays in warm rooms, endlessly eating the mulberry leaves heaped about them. They saw skeins of queer raw silk, and were given a strand for a souvenir.

Then they went down to the wharves; and saw the agile little fishermen on their slow-moving boats.

"Those boats look nice and peaceful," said Red, staring at a dark, sullen ship.

"Their dreadnaughts, over at Yokohama, are not so peaceful. They have to have 'em for protection," said David. "All countries have to have protective navies."

"They sure looked as though they could protect, all right."

"We will try to go to Yokohama," said the guide, "but not today. Not plenty enough time."

Driving a little way beyond the city, they saw tiny farms, perhaps two and a half acres

in extent, all under the most intensive cultivation. On the way back they entered the old part of the city, where they saw temples lovely as dreams. They went through small shops, where men were decorating exquisite pieces of porcelain, painting on silk, or carving precious stones, ivory, and teak.

"Take me home," moaned David at last, as he paid for just one more purchase. "I mustn't buy another thing."

"But they are so cheap," murmured Red, arranging a whole procession of tiny elephants and regarding them with fascinated eyes. "I've a notion our lad here keeps a critical eye on the price tags. These storekeepers are always castin' eyes at him."

"Well, take your elephants, and let's go. I know you are going to buy them."

"This has been simply great," David told their guide when they arrived at their hotel. "I never had a better time in my life. Thanks a lot. I wish you would tell us your name."

The young man hesitated. "It iss most hard to speak it, that name," he said, "but in your America, iss not Bill the often name of the chauffeur?"

The boys laughed.

"Yeah, it's American, all right," said Red.

"All right, Bill," said David as he shook the

young man's hand heartily. "Whatever you say goes. Thanks a whole lot for the ride, and everything. Gee, it's been wonderful!"

In the lobby they found Mr. Hammond waiting, as the Moonbeam people drifted in by two's and three's. The last to appear was Prince Hata, piloting his two professors. Doctor Trigg was wreathed in smiles. Doctor Sims, looking almost sprightly, clutched his precious notebook and a small parcel.

"Well, well, here's our pretty girl!" said Doctor Trigg, smiling at Dulcie. "Thanks to Hata, here, we have had a wonderful morning—wonderful. If we were obliged to leave Japan now, at once, I should still feel repaid for the journey. Our old pupil has done so much for us," he patted the Prince fondly.

"It would be many times impossible for me or mine to do enough for you, sir. I was such a stupid boy, and you both were so always patient."

"Tut, tut, Hata, you always had a very retentive mind. Well, Miss Dulcie, I saw a little trinket, which Hata secured for me, and I have brought it to you. I want you to accept it with an old man's affection."

"Ha—grr-r-r-r-r, same here!" said Doctor Sims, dropping his parcel into Dulcie's lap.

She opened the quaint worn metal cases.

In each nestled a jewel of purest jade; a necklace from Doctor Trigg, and from Doctor Sims a bracelet. Dulcie had never seen anything quite so lovely.

"Oh, you dears, you shouldn't have done it," she sighed, brooding lovingly over the jewels.

"Mere trifles," said Doctor Sims. "I think Hata, here, beat the shopkeepers down."

Prince Hata smiled. "They received their price," he assured them. "Quite most satisfactory."

Dulcie looked at him suspiciously. She knew a little about jade. But the dark face was bland and impassive. After all, whatever Hata had done, he had done to give happiness to his two old friends. Dulcie rallied a diplomacy equal to his own. "They are perfect," she said. "And I love you both for them. I shall keep them all my life, and remember how I came by them, and what they mean."

"We have a most old saying in Japan, Miss Hammond," said Prince Hata. "'The jewel is never so lovely as the wearer.' I mourn that I shall not see you again today except in my capacity as official. There is a garden party to stroll into this afternoon, and tonight enters a great dinner. Afterwards an entertainment for the officers and crew. You

might enjoy to go. It is permissible. The Geisha girls will dance.

"Tomorrow, Miss Hammond, I do trust that you will graciously allow my mother to receive you. She is unfortunately unable to leave her home. If you would so benevolently come to her?"

"I would love to," cried Dulcie.

"Thank you. Then I will so arrange, and send you word." He made his cordial, graceful farewells and departed.

"Well, Prince Hata's mother must be a princess," mused Dulcie.

"She is the Emperor's aunt," said Doctor Trigg, absently.

"Aunt!" cried Dulcie. "Aunt! Then Prince Hata is the Emperor's cousin!"

"Quite likely," said Doctor Trigg. "I say, Sims, those manuscripts Hata showed us—"

"Oh, what have I let myself in for!" cried Dulcie, interrupting. "I don't know how to behave before emperors' aunts."

"Pshaw!" laughed Mr. Hammond. "Don't forget that you yourself are the heir of the ages."

"Certainly!" said Doctor Trigg. "Besides, she is a very agreeable old lady. A trifle ceremonious, but very agreeable. We dropped in this morning."

"To see the Princess?" demanded Dulcie.

"Yes," said Doctor Trigg. "Unofficially, of course, unofficially. The old lady does not give audiences to men as a rule, but we were her son's teachers, you see, and she seemed to have an idea that she wanted to thank us personally for the attention we had given him during his course at Princeton. Hata took us to the palace to see some manuscripts. She heard we were there, so she sent word for us to drop in and see her."

"Simple, like that," murmured Dulcie. "They just dropped in!"

Mr. Hammond laughed.

"By the way, Dulcie, did you know that Mr. Hamilton has left us? He had to get back to Paris by the quickest route. He's flying to Baku, then to Moscow, then straight over. He has to attend a big directors' meeting of their Paris house."

"What a shame!" cried Dulcie. "Goodness, daddy, I'm glad you aren't a big business man. It's no wonder they get 'tired', is it?" she added wickedly.

CHAPTER XII

CUSTOMS AND COSTUMES

Dulcie dressed for the luncheon that was being given for her by the Japanese Vassar Club, and was immediately driven away to their club house by the faithful Bill. The men of the party had a luncheon at the Aviation Club, an important function because both Mr. Hammond and David were to be presented with decorations. Already Mr. Hammond wore two gorgeous medals presented to him in Friedrichshafen. David glittered in a slightly smaller way and it embarrassed him very much.

When the party from the Moonbeam entered the club, they saw that a large number of very high ranking officials were present. Most of them being older men, they did not speak English, so the speeches of the hosts and the replies of the guests trickled through the medium of an interpreter. Aside from that drawback, and the presence of glittering or-

derlies standing behind the chairs of the Japanese generals and ministers, they might have been dining at any first-class hotel at home.

The young officer on David's right spoke only a few broken words of English, but beamed and smiled so brightly that David wished he could communicate with him in some common tongue. Suddenly he thought of an almost forgotten knack of caricature which had always gone over big at school. He brought out a pencil and on the back of the menu drew, with a few sharp strokes, pictures of Mr. Hammond and the others, not sparing himself.

They were very funny. He set them forth on the top of a fat and wobbly blimp with sagging hull. Each one of them was looking through long field glasses toward a point marked with a rising sun. The young Japanese laughed heartily and handed him another card. On the bottom of this David drew a small, distant glimpse of the landing field at Kasumigaura. The eager visitors were shown dancing on the top of their unwieldy ship, and from each mouth issued a balloon inscribed *"Banzai."*

David was not sure that the idea would get across, but it did. The clever sketches traveled around the great table, and with the

laughter they called forth the stiff decorum of the meal lightened into a more free and friendly atmosphere.

Helping each other as best they could, with gestures and drawings, David managed to tell the group of young aviators about him many things concerning aviation in America that they were very anxious to know.

The luncheon lasted far into the afternoon. The ceremonies attending the presentation of the medals were long and dignified. When the big, glittering, bejeweled bauble had been pinned on Mr. Hammond's coat, with many suave and pleasant words from the donors, and when Mr. Hammond had replied with thanks and prophecies for the welding of nations through aviation, David felt his muscles tighten. Now he would get a medal pinned on him, but he wouldn't have to speak. He hadn't spoken in Friedrichshafen, so why here? When his name was spoken, he went to the head of the table, where he stood facing the highest ranking officer of the aviation corps in Japan. David stood very straight and stiff, his broad shoulders squared, his head high. He was very handsome—and exceedingly embarrassed.

The general, medal in hand, began to speak, slowly, so the interpreter could keep pace with

him. To David's consternation, the general referred to David's youth and to the fact that he had taken over the ship in the teeth of a hurricane, and had brought her to safety. He congratulated aviation and America on possessing such a fine young pilot. David felt his very ears growing red. Then the medal was pinned on his breast, and behold, it was the twin of Mr. Hammond's.

Released at last, David somehow gained his seat, and dropped into it. He looked at Mr. Hammond. That gentleman was signaling him to get up. David drew a long shuddering breath as he rose.

"Oh, my Lord!" he breathed, and with his voice croaking with fright he launched into his first public speech.

"Your Excellencies, and gentlemen," he commenced: "I don't know how to thank you for your kindness. I really don't deserve it. The Moonbeam is so staunch that she could just about take care of herself. She's a wonderful ship, and I hope you will soon have one like her."

"Banzai! Banzai!" cried the Japanese.

"This is a wonderful experience, being here, and I hope it will not be my last flight to Japan," David continued. "You are all so kind. I only hope that many of you, indeed

all of you, will come to America as soon as you can so that we may have the opportunity of returning, at least in part, your many courtesies. We will show you our landing fields. They are very large, most of them, but we have nothing as beautiful as Kasumigaura.

"I thank you again for the honor you have shown me."

Somehow he found himself safe in his chair, with applause all about him. On his breast the medal winked and flashed. It fussed him greatly.

Someone nudged his elbow. The lieutenant in the next seat held a card under the edge of the table. On it his new friend had tried his hand at drawing. A huge, very Japanesque figure with wide shoulders and something, supposedly the uniform of the Moonbeam, loosely encasing his form, stood smiling widely. Covering his breast was a medal. At either side a group of pigmies all ejaculated *"Banzai!"* David recognized himself under the queer Japanese features, and shook with laughter, to the great delight of the artist, who was so pleased with his own cleverness that David made him a present of his gold pencil as a souvenir.

At four o'clock they were all driven to the garden party given on the grounds of the Em-

peror's palace. David was in Mr. Hammond's car.

"Well, David, how we do glisten!" said the commander as they took their seats. "Don't talk to me after our escorts come aboard, as I am afraid it isn't polite. I was proud of you, my boy."

"Gosh," said David, "I thought I'd go right plumb through the floor! I never made a speech in my life. All dressed up like a band wagon, too. Do I dare take this breastplate off?"

"Heavens, no! We've got to wear 'em on every occasion as long as we are here. Why, David, it's a tremendous honor."

"Yes, sir; I suppose so."

"Quiet does it now. Here come the others. Unfurl your brightest smile," and Mr. Hammond turned to the officers approaching the car.

The host at the garden party was the Emperor's personal representative, the Minister of Ceremony. He was a gentle, unassuming old man with a kindly face and the perfect manners made by centuries of ceremonious usage. He was assisted by many members of the court, of whom Hata was the most important.

The gardens were lovely beyond words to

the appreciative eyes of the visitors. They seemed like fairyland. Each shrub, each tree, each tiny plant grew in orderly, exquisite beauty.

David found Dulcie gazing out at a carved and filigreed pavilion which seemed to have drifted down softly upon the lake, where it rested in a fringe of bright green water plants.

"I couldn't bear very much of this," she said soberly. "It is too beautiful. It won't let me be myself at all. I like to be good, but I couldn't keep on being as good as I am this minute. I couldn't stand it. You know, David, the beautiful places at home shout at you, like an organ or a big chorus. This whispers and murmurs. You have to stop and listen to it, and when you do that, it gets you."

"Come over here and break the spell," laughed David. "They are serving American ice cream in the gaudy silk tents beyond that hedge."

The dinner that night was given by the city of Tokio. Mr. Hammond promised to send David back to the hotel for Dulcie when it was over, so that she might see the dancing in the Tea House of a Thousand Flowers.

There was no formal placing at this dinner. Many of the Japanese spoke English, and David, to his great joy, found the youngest

reporter seated at his left, with the star reporter just across the table. The tables were placed around the walls of the large room, with a space in the middle.

"What's all that floor space for?" asked the youngest reporter, who was occasionally known as Fred. "Do you suppose the Geishas are going to dance here? It gums my works if they are, because I simply gotter have that Tea House of a Thousand Flowers for local color. Gosh, isn't this great?"

"When you have been a correspondent as long as I have," the star reporter cut in, "you won't need local color. You will carry your own paints. I could write up that Tea House of a Thousand Flowers right now so you could actually smell it. But they won't have the Geishas here."

"I heard they are going to give some heavy stuff between courses," said David. "Historical, and all that. Hope they do. I want to see something good. Why can't they give us a devil-dance, or something?"

"Cling to your lingerie," advised the star. "If I mistake not, you will see the real thing tonight. Something to make the Geishas look like a row of sparrows hunting crumbs on a park bench."

The first course came on, and David fell to,

softly voicing the hope that he might be spared to go home once more. At the close, while the plates were changed, soft queer music was played on strange instruments, the like of which David had never seen.

"Kind of throbbish, isn't it?" he asked Fred.

"Hang on!" admonished the star, substituting his own cigarette for one of Japanese make.

At the close of the second course, the plates were changed quickly and the lights went down to a dusky glow. The music changed.

All at once two figures occupied the center of the floor. They were men lithe and supple. They were masked hideously. Their costumes were indescribable. At once they plunged into an orgy of action through which ran a certain savage grace. They crept, leaped, swayed, whirled, their gorgeous jeweled costumes swinging and flashing. Then they were gone, the lights flashed up.

"That is the beginning of a most old and antic dance," remarked a Japanese on David's right. "You know, antic—that which has come down from so old time. Regard—behold! More is yet coming."

"What is it all about?" asked David.

"Old-time devils in Japan," explained the man.

"I thought so," said David. "They sort of look that way."

"Yess, that way," agreed the Japanese. "You watch!"

The dance alternated with the dinner. Changes of masks, different costumes, and new dancers came and went in an exhibition more exotic than David's wildest dreams.

At last it was over. The two chief dancers fell, having carefully pretended to stab each other with long thin swords, and were assisted out by helpful hands. The dance and the dinner were ended.

"I'm all bogged down," said the youngest reporter. "I've a notion to go home and go to bed."

"What, and miss seeing the Tea House of a Thousand Flowers?" asked the star. "You can't do that. Come on, little one! Don't let's forsake Captain Ellison."

"I'm the quitter," said David. "The chief told me off to go and bring Miss Hammond over to see the Geishas. I must beat it."

When Dulcie came down in the elevator and stepped into the bright light of the lobby, David involuntarily exclaimed at her fresh beauty.

"Good Lord, woman, what have you done to yourself? You look as new as paint."

"Some of it is paint, of course," said Dulcie, "but I've had a nap, and I've had good care."

"I'm like to drop in my tracks," said David, "and your father—well, I caught him sneaking a powder into his glass somewhere about the middle of the nineteenth course."

"Bicarb—I hope it fixed him."

"If it didn't, that dinner will," groaned David. "I'll bet they had three chefs—Japanese, American, and French—to fix that dinner. The Japanese camouflage things so you don't know what you are eating. I thought I was taking a dandy baked apple. It had red cheeks, and a fresh stem sticking out with a real apple leaf on it. And by George, it was mashed potato! Everything like that.

"I keep drawing dinner partners who can't speak English, and somebody's French doesn't click, perhaps it is mine. They try me in German, and some other funny lingoes; then we all give up, and nod and wave our arms at each other the rest of the meal. Believe me, I've had my lesson. When I get home I am going to learn to speak German and French and Spanish, some Italian, a little Scandahoovian, and enough Czechoslovakian to put me across."

"You are going to be busy," Dulcie said grimly.

"Well, joking aside," David continued, "an aviator ought to be able to speak something beside the good old mother tongue. It makes me ashamed to grin and flap and contort my face at these people who are doing everything that can be done to make our visit pleasant, and showering us with presents, beside. And we can only thank them through an interpreter. I've always suspected those guys. I'm afraid they don't transmit the fine shades of my eloquence."

"I know," said Dulcie. "I'd like to tell my little maid how I appreciate everything she does for me. It's an awful nuisance that I can't. And tonight what a lot more fun it would be if we could know what it is all about."

"Being a mere man," said David, "I shall get quite a kick merely out of seeing those Geisha girls dance. Hello, here we are already!"

They had arrived at the most pretentious and luxurious tea house in the city, the Tea House of a Thousand Flowers. A couple of Japanese aviators were watching for them, and ushered them into the tea house, where a native orchestra was tuning up. Most of the passengers of the Moonbeam were present, while the officers and crew had come as

one man. Dulcie and David joined Mr. Hammond and his hosts, and immediately refreshments were served.

The Geisha girls trotted out on the floor. They had honored their audience this night by wearing their most elaborate and colorful costumes. The music beat out a strange dreamy tune. The tiny dancers with their placid, bland little faces might well have been animated flowers. Their shuffling short steps gave the effect of gliding as they gyrated, weaving and interweaving in a series of rhythmic movements as old as time—movements that had been premeditated and practiced to the last turn.

"What a kick the crew is getting out of all this," whispered David. "They will all go home and talk darkly about having seen the Geisha girls dancing and they will say, 'Boy, it was some dance, believe me!' I wish you could have seen the other dance at the dinner. That was just plain fierce."

The music stopped and the little dancers trotted out. Next came a troupe of Japanese jugglers, who whirled gaily painted barrels, gold chairs and small boys about their heads with an abandon that made Dulcie gasp and the crew of the Moonbeam roar with approval. Next came a tight-rope act, which

included such difficult and daring feats that the audience was spellbound.

"Makes me feel as though I was at home at Keith's, only it's a thousand times better than Keith's ever thought of being," whispered David.

After the tight-rope walkers the Geishas were to dance again, and then more juggling and a sword dance, but Dulcie said, "I've seen enough, David. I'm tired, after all. Can't we go?"

"Same here," responded David. "It has been a whirligig of a day. Ask your father if we can't be excused."

"That's all right," Mr. Hammond agreed. "I'll explain to the Master of Ceremonies. Go out as quietly as you can."

Prince Hata accompanied them to the car, where Bill lounged at the wheel.

"Perhaps a little drive under our Japanese moon would make more happiness for you after your strenuous day," suggested the Prince, as he said good-night.

"That would be fine," declared David. "Just for a little while."

The Prince spoke to Bill. As they drove away, Dulcie said, "How nice and friendly they are to each other! Not a bit haughty. Did you notice what a friendly sort of under-

standing smile Prince Hata gave Bill?"

"No; but they are all polite."

"They never seem to scrap," said Dulcie. "It is beautiful."

"Uh-uh! They never do seem to scrap but, my child, these angel beings can fight like demons. All this politeness, centuries old, has made them value each other. That's simply psychological. They are utterly loyal to Japan for what it is, what it has been, and what it will be. However, they are struggling against the terrible handicap of lack of territory, and the only possible way for them to get it is through conquest. The sea won't give it to them, and other nations naturally won't donate it. So if they want it, they have got to fight for it. And as they are not afraid to die, why, when they do fight, Miss Hammond, they just wade right in."

"Well, don't let's go under the crust, tonight. I want my memories all as lovely as this." She leaned forward. "Where are you taking us, Bill?"

The young Japanese slowed down and turned deferentially.

"There iss a place in the Imperial grounds, near the Emperor's palace, that iss said to be of the loveliest in Japan. It iss said that the Emperor himself loves it. The windows of

hiss personal suite look upon it. The Emperor sits long in those window, and dreams upon it. They have many names for it; 'Pearl of Japan' and 'Window of Heaven' and 'Vision of the Heart'."

"Oh, do take us there, Bill!"

"How will you get into the grounds?" asked David. "I understand the palace gates are locked and guarded at night."

"I was most graciously given permission that I should take you there. Usually only princes of the blood are allowed to be admitted at night."

At the gate of the Imperial grounds, two sentries sprang from the shadow. Orders had evidently been given them, however, for they glanced at Bill and saluted.

They rolled forward into the soft and perfumed dusk of over-arching trees. Bill put the dimmers on, and the big car made scarcely a sound.

"Do you know," said David after a silence, "I have a feeling that this is the greatest concession they have made us; the greatest compliment. To bring us into the Emperor's grounds at night, to see a view! Even if he is away, everything belonging to the royal family is guarded as though sacred. It's queer!"

On and on they went, until a sudden turn brought them to an arch made of flowering trees, cut and woven and trained into a perfect bow. They passed under it and on into a denser shade, and suddenly beheld the vista they had come to see. Bill stopped the car.

In awed silence they regarded the serene beauty of the view. Beyond the black shadow of the trees, the water lay like sheets of dazzling silver. At the water's edge, grass and flowers assumed new tints, shadows were purple, and far in the distance the Sacred Mountain seemed to float like an opalescent bubble in the ether. Overhead hung the great golden moon.

At last Dulcie spoke in a whisper, "Thank you, Bill!" And understanding, as always, Bill turned the car and returned to the great gate.

Dulcie was silent all the way to the hotel. When she stepped out, she turned impulsively to Bill.

"I'll never forget this evening, Bill. I wish I could do something nice for you." She unclasped her bag, but there was a queer dignity about Bill that forbade a tip. She snapped it shut. "You speak English so well; if you are ever in New York, find my father. I'd perfectly love to have you for my chauffeur."

The young man's eyes suddenly danced. "It is that I thank you, Miss Hammond. I'll not forget," he said.

Dulcie did not waken the following morning in time to see her father. Indeed she was just dressed when word was brought up that the car was waiting to take her to see the princess. It was late when she returned, and she ordered dinner in her own room, and went early to bed.

Mr. Hammond and David did not return to the Imperial Hotel until a very late hour. Stopping at the desk on the way to his room, Mr. Hammond found that the whole party had been the guests of the hotel for the entire time of their visit.

Early transportation had been arranged to take them to the port at Kasumigaura in the morning so, writing a word to Dulcie warning her to be on time, Mr. Hammond smoked a last cigar and tumbled into bed.

CHAPTER XIII

AN EAVESDROPPER

The Moonbeam was to take off from Kasumigaura at half-past seven on Sunday morning. Mr. Hammond had reached the airport at a very early hour but it was not until seven-fifteen that he saw in the distance a group of cars bringing the last laggard passengers, among them Dulcie and her elderly escorts, Doctors Trigg and Sims.

Mr. Hammond gave a sigh of relief, and went at once into the directors' room where their Excellencies, the Japanese Ministers of State and War, awaited him. There were the last compliments to be paid, the last papers to be signed, the last farewells to be spoken, and at twenty minutes of eight the Moonbeam took flight.

As on her arrival, she circled the city of Tokio, returned to salute the port of Kasumigaura, and sailed out over the Pacific Ocean on the last leg of her journey around the world.

At nine o'clock Mr. Hammond, watching the endless expanse of glistening water from the windows of the control room, suddenly remembered something.

"Why, I haven't had my breakfast," he said to David. "Clean forgot it!"

"You had better have some coffee, hadn't you, sir? I could do with a cup myself."

Giving the wheel to Van Arden, the two started for the salon. At the door Mr. Hammond stopped.

"What the—what's this?" he demanded, looking suspiciously at Dulcie. In the middle of the room stood a large chest made of exquisite wood-inlay, delicately colored. It was evidently an antique, rare as well as beautiful. "Dulcie, I told you we didn't want to take any more weight on board."

"That's not more weight. That's Mr. Hamilton," Dulcie explained sweetly.

"Mr. Hamilton! Now what do you mean, Dulcie?"

"Well, daddy, Prince Hata made me a present of that chest, and I really didn't forget what you said about weight. But I found I could lift one end of the chest quite easily, and you know I couldn't lift an end of Mr. Hamilton. So I thought to myself, 'There! Mr. Hamilton has left the ship, and my chest

can go in his place.' I think it was rather clever of me, don't you?"

Mr. Hammond groaned.

"And," Dulcie went on, "I was dying to tell Doctor Trigg and Doctor Sims and David about my visit to the palace, but I wouldn't until you were here."

"Amazing abnegation," said Doctor Sims.

"Well, if abnegation means being perfectly crazy to tell, and waiting patiently for hours and hours till my own father can hear it first, why, that's it," said Dulcie. "Go on and eat, you two, and I'll tell about it.

"The two princesses came for me. Dad, you should have seen them. Paris frocks, tricky hats, wonderful shoes. Absolutely the latest things in sport clothes. They both speak perfect English, even up-to-date slang. And they said, 'What a dear you are to come! We have been dying to meet you, but we have been down at the summer palace, and only got home late last night!' And it seems they are ladies-in-waiting to the Empress and had to get permission to leave for a few hours.

"When we reached the palace, they said to come up to their rooms while they dressed, and I could tell them all about dear old Vassar, and how awful it was about the last Army and Navy game. We went through an Aladdin's

palace to reach their rooms, where a couple of maids appeared by magic, and the girls simply dashed out of their frocks and were put into layers of Japanese robes, crusted stiff with gold embroidery. It seems the princess, their mother, does not allow them to wear foreign dress in the home. She is old-school. I asked what about me, but they said I was all right.

"The last big sash was just tied on when the princess sent for us, and we went down to the audience room. I was scared to death. I followed them into the room, and there was the princess sitting in a carved chair on a little platform, with a group of attendants behind her. The girls went up and bowed very low, and spoke to their mother in sweet-sounding Japanese. The old princess held up her tiny little old hand in a gesture of greeting, and I made a deep, deep curtsey, nearly to the floor. When I looked up she was smiling at me, and her little face looked so kind and plain under its jeweled headdress that I curtsied again.

"She said something to the princesses that they didn't translate, but they told me later that she was very much pleased with me. Wasn't that lucky? I did so want to be a credit to you!

"Then we stood and talked, and sipped tea,

and the princess asked me questions which the girls translated. She sent all sorts of felicitations to you on your flight. Presently she gave a signal, and I said good-bye, and sort of backed out, leaving her there in the middle of that enormous room full of wonders, looking for all the world like an old ivory figurine.

"We went into a queer, sweet room where Prince Hata was waiting for us, and luncheon was served—a real Japanese meal with a few American extras for me. When the Prince had to go back to you, we went back to the girls' rooms, and talked college, and all that. I know a number of the girls they know at home, but I guess I am the only one who knows how very important they are over here. They are both coming to visit me next winter."

"Good-night!" exclaimed David.

"They are just regular girls," said Dulcie. "Of course, being princesses has its drawbacks, but they have had lots of good times, even so.

"Well, while we were talking a couple of men-servants came in with this chest. It was for me, from Prince Hata. The girls evidently expected it, for they hopped up and clapped their hands, and in came a couple of

maids carrying a whole outfit of Japanese ceremonial robes. Everything a princess would wear at court.

"Then the older princess brought a square box, and said, 'This is from mother,' and there was a jeweled headdress.

"They had me take off my dress, and the two maids dressed me up in everything. Daddy, I looked too grand! I'm going to give a Japanese party just as soon as we get back. And we'd better put in a Japanese garden for it. You can radio that big landscape man. He'll know how to make one."

Mr. Hammond sighed. "The parent pays," he paraphrased sadly.

Dulcie ignored that.

"When you see everything, you won't blame me for bringing it along." She opened the chest, which smelled pungently of mysterious perfumes, and one by one lifted out the priceless garments and the wonderful headdress.

"Museum pieces, every one," declared Doctor Trigg.

"I don't know what to say to all this," said Mr. Hammond.

"There is nothing you can say," said Dulcie. "I had a hard time saying anything, myself. I was simply flabbergasted."

"How did you get it out here?"

"Oh, that nice Bill had a friend drive it out in a Ford truck. Bill is a nice boy. He gave me a package, too, when I shook hands good-bye. Think of that! I told him, by the way, dad, that if he ever wanted to chauffeur in America, he could drive for me."

"Har!" said Doctor Sims twice.

"Here is the package. Let's open it." She undid the soft paper, and found an inner wrapping of silk around a quaint box of hand wrought silver. Opening it, she gave a little cry of delight.

"Oh, Bill shouldn't have done this!" she cried, holding up a jewel. It was a heart made of a close-set line of red stones. Within the heart, on a fragile bit of chain, hung a large pear-shaped pearl.

"Look at it!" whispered Dulcie.

"Well, well," said Doctor Trigg, taking the exquisite thing in his hand. "Fortunately I can explain this to you, Dulcie. In my studies of the Orient, its peoples and customs, I distinctly remember a description of this very jewel. It is a gift designed especially for young girls just budding into womanhood. This heart typifies the heart of woman. Red blood (the sacred rubies) trace its outline. Within hangs this pearl, the tear which is within every heart. But it cannot escape

while the sacred rubies imprison it. A lovely thought."

"Another museum piece," said Doctor Sims.

"Bill shouldn't have done it," repeated Dulcie, in an absolutely stricken tone. "How will he ever pay for it?"

"Don't worry," said Doctor Trigg. "He won't feel it. You see, Dulcie, his position as chauffeur was rather a lark. It was only for the duration of our visit. Bill's name is really Prince Kayoto. He is Hata's cousin."

"Oh, oh!" cried Dulcie. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"He didn't wish it. Besides, it was really immaterial. You treated him like a prince."

"Yes, I offered him a job—a good job as chauffeur!" She laughed.

"It will give you both something to laugh over when you come to Princeton next winter to visit Trigg and me," said Doctor Sims so unexpectedly that Mr. Hammond stared. "Kayoto is enrolled as a student."

Dulcie folded the garments and put away her treasures in the beautiful chest.

The remainder of the day was very quiet on board the Moonbeam. Everyone was exhausted from their strenuous days in Japan, and welcomed a rest. It was only about eight o'clock that evening when Dulcie said, "I am

going to leave you three boys," and smiled at her father and Doctors Trigg and Sims. "Good-night, daddy." She pulled him down and kissed him. "You, too," she added, walking over to the two doctors. "You are both so sweet to me." She dropped light kisses on the professors' withered cheeks, and went away.

"A nice child—a sweet child," said Doctor Trigg, softly.

Doctor Sims touched his cheek with a careful finger. Finally he said,—

"Trigg, I am beginning to wonder if a lifetime spent in the unbroken dissemination of knowledge, exclusively to men's classes, does not occasionally leave something, a subtle intangible something, to be desired."

Doctor Trigg looked at his friend. "Poor old Sims," he said; then as an afterthought, "Poor old me!"

By the following morning the Moonbeam had made more than her usual mileage. She seemed destined to escape the stormy, unsettled winds that had kept the Graf Zeppelin dodging while on the same lap of the journey. Far ahead, ominous masses of black clouds would pile up, only to melt away as they approached. On either side they watched sudden storms rise, struggle and disappear. It

was as though they were moving in a charmed area, where there were no adverse currents and the steady tail-wind persisted. The hours passed uneventfully enough to please even as exacting a pilot as David.

Radiograms flew back and forth from Friedrichshafen, Tokio, Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York, while from numbers of American cities came messages asking the Moonbeam to divert her course sufficiently to pay them an aerial call.

Mr. Hammond found it hard to refuse these requests. He was so proud of the Moonbeam that he wanted the whole country to see their American dirigible. He kept a list of the radiograms, and determined to make a later trip which would embrace all the larger cities of the United States. He was bombarded with requests by radio from eager, highly efficient publicity men, taking time by the forelock, and offering every known inducement for a word of commendation from him for products ranging from cigarettes to breakfast bacon. Far away as they still were, they commenced to feel the stir and restlessness that is America.

High spirits prevailed, and an ever-increasing sense of friendliness. A pool was made on the day's mileage, and wagers as to

the exact hour and minute of sighting land. Late in the afternoon the youngest reporter exclaimed, "Say, d'you know that it's to-morrow that we gain a day? We go to bed Monday night and wake up Monday morning. Gee, isn't that funny?"

"Har, no!" said Doctor Sims. "What's a day lost or gained in the immensity of time?"

"Time has no immensity, except in perspective," said Doctor Trigg. "An extra day may be of paramount importance to our young friend."

"He himself is merely an infinitesimal atom," said Doctor Sims, regarding the youngest reporter critically. "So are you; so am I."

"Undoubtedly. But as an atom, I confess that I regard the gaining of a day with a certain thrill. One day, Nicholas! A day which may change the course of empire, breed great men, give some needed discovery to the world, write a deathless song, or see a noble deed done."

"Or some great wrong," added Doctor Sims.

"If so, Nicholas, be sure that Time will right it."

"It will mean an extra eight-eighty on my pay check, anyhow," said the youngest reporter.

"Didn't I tell you, Nicholas?" asked Doctor Trigg.

"You tell me so much!" exploded Doctor Sims wrathfully.

When everyone woke up to their second Monday, there was a feeling that something out of the ordinary ought to happen to celebrate it. But the extra day went serenely on its way, with what Doctor Sims called "an ostentatious lack of incident."

Whenever they were at liberty David and Red pored over the plans of David's invention, and talked about it with technical abandon. David did not undervalue Red's help, and it depressed his just and generous heart to think that they could not benefit together on the invention, but to secure the patent, manufacture and put it on the market would take more thousands of dollars than both boys would possess in the next twenty years.

David was faced by the conditions that discourage effort in so many young inventors. Usually their sessions were broken up by Red's furious demand of fate to know why the barren farm in Oklahoma, only twenty miles from Wally's gushers, remained stubbornly dry. Twice had the Ryans, pooling their meager resources, drilled down, never even reaching sand.

David did not wish to mention his invention to Mr. Hammond until he had put it up for the prize at the Goodlow School. He did not know that Dulcie had spoken to her father about it. However, Mr. Hammond respected his reticence, and asked no questions.

Late on that queer second Monday, Red met Dulcie in the control room.

"I hear you have bespoken a new chauffeur, Miss Hammond," he said quizzically. "I wonder you didn't offer me the job."

"I couldn't," said Dulcie. "I knew all the time that you are a prince."

"Is it so?" said Red, his blue eyes dancing. "Well, 'twould have been a pity not to have been recognized by a lady in one's own rank. And," he added, "don't think it strange that I have not lavished gifts on you like those others. Truth is, I'm havin' some stars taken down, very careful, with some chunks of that Japanese moon, and set for your wearin', in bracelets of platinum dug in the Urals. All of which takes time."

David and Van Arden joined in the laugh. Red sauntered away, but an hour later he was back, a troubled look on his face.

"There's no use trying to make better time," he said gloomily. "Those engineers are doing their best, and so are the engines, but they

have their limitations. Gosh, how I hate to disappoint the Big Fella!"

They sauntered back to David's stateroom.

"I wish I had my accelerators. They are so simple that we might have had a set made in Tokio. I bet they would have speeded us up ten miles an hour."

"I wish the plans were in a safe," said Red uneasily. "Where are they now?"

"In that suitcase."

"In that suitcase!" repeated Red loudly. "My Lord, anybody could lift 'em! And you've nothing on earth but my word to prove they are yours! It has taken two years to perfect them, and before you could reconstruct them, the other fellow could get the prize, or market them somehow. You are crazy to leave them there."

"Don't be such an old woman, Red! No one knows about them, and if they did, no one on this ship would take them. However, I wish we had a set installed. As the engines are now, we simply can't make better speed. But with that friction removed and all the rest of it, there ought to be a great difference."

"Well," said Red, "something has got to be done, and darned quick, or we'll be toddling into Lakehurst on Zeppelin time, or more. And we'd get the merry ha-ha all around.

Anyhow, you put those papers under lock and key."

David laughed, and followed Red forward to the chart room, where the indicator stood stubbornly at seventy miles.

But they did not know that at the moment when they had stepped from David's cabin into the passage, a man had slipped like a shadow into another room; a man, who, just outside David's open door, had listened to the conversation between the two friends.

The listener stood deep in thought.

"In the suitcase, eh?" he whispered. "Well, there's no hurry."

* * * * * *

But that night Red woke suddenly. David, a flashlight in his hand, was shaking him. He was very pale.

"Wake up, Red!" he said. "The plans are gone!"

CHAPTER XIV

ON THE OBSERVER'S PLATFORM

Red lunged up, awake in an instant. "What's that?" he demanded.

"The plans are gone; you were right."

Red, swearing softly and fervently, commenced to throw on his clothes.

"No use cussing," said David. "We've got to think what to do. I just left the wheel, and what you said kind of worried me, so I thought I'd hide 'em. I opened the case, and they were gone."

"Did you look around?" asked Red.

"Of course; but they are not in the cabin."

"What's the time?"

"Three."

Trouble came scrambling up, curled around in Red's lap, and commenced to purr. Automatically Red scratched the small ear.

"Gone!" he repeated. "Well, they have got to be somewhere. Just one thing to do, Dave. Go to Mr. Hammond the minute he's up, and

tell him the whole thing. It's a dirty scandal, of course, but those plans must be found. Let's go down."

"Easy does it," warned David. "Don't want to wake anybody."

Silently, thoroughly, they searched every inch of David's room. The plans were not there. They could not sleep, so they sat in the salon and smoked. There Mr. Hammond found them when, as usual, he came out at dawn. Briefly they told him what had happened.

"By George," he said, "that's a rotten shame! Who on earth would do it? Whom do you suspect?"

"Well, sir," said Red grimly, "my brother always says, 'Don't ever lose time suspectin' anybody. Look for a motive'."

"There's a good deal in that, but I confess I don't see any motives just now. Wonder if there is any coffee left over. This has upset me."

"I'll make some, sir, if you can keep the cook from stabbin' me later," said Red, and he went into the spotless galley.

While Red made coffee, David explained something of the nature of the device minutely described in the stolen plans, what he had hoped it would mean to dirigible navi-

gation, and his high hopes of winning the Goodlow School prize with it. When Red returned with the steaming percolator Mr. Hammond tested the brew with evident satisfaction.

"Perfect," he said. "Now I can think. We have been talking this invention over, Red. Why, it is a great thing! Just what we have been groping for. If it is a success, it is immensely valuable. The papers must be found."

"They must," said Red, "for it will work. I know it!"

"I wouldn't have had such a thing happen for anything," mused Mr. Hammond. "With the ship full of newspaper correspondents lapping everything up for copy! But we can't side-step. We will have a meeting right after breakfast."

To avoid crowding the salon, Mr. Hammond divided the meeting. The passengers, officers, and three engineers met first. Mr. Hammond laid the case before them, and each man was searched. Afterward the crew and the rest of the engineers gathered. There was a general demand, led by Wally, for a search of everybody's personal belongings. Committees were formed, every garment was examined, every cushion probed, hangings taken

down, books and magazines gone over leaf by leaf.

The crew's quarters were searched. Men in their soft overalls and felt shoes swarmed over the catwalks in the vast hull and looked in every conceivable place where a packet of papers might have been hidden. A cloud rested on the Moonbeam. Everyone was anxious and angry.

The case seemed more flagrant on account of David's popularity. Not a man of the ship, officers, passengers or crew, who was not wholly devoted to the young captain. Everyone rejoiced in his success. The manner in which he had piloted the ship through storm and calm aroused in them an unselfish pride. They were back of him, ready to do anything. Yet here someone had stolen from him something more than money. They had stolen his hopes and his ambitions.

David had spent every leisure hour for months on his invention. There was a time limit on the entrants for the contest. All papers must be in the hands of the judges no later than the fifteenth of July, ten days after they were scheduled to reach Lakehurst. The plans could not be reconstructed in ten weeks.

During the morning Doctor Sims and David met in the passageway.

"Well, young man, whom are you suspecting?" demanded the professor.

"No one," replied David. "I've been advised to look for a motive."

"Correct; but there might be several motives. Jealousy, vanity, the desire for money or fame, revenge—a wide choice."

"Envy, hatred, and malice all point just one way with me," said Red, when David repeated the professor's words to him, "but it can't be. Wally wouldn't dare do such a thing."

"Oh, Lord, there you go on Wally again! What in thunder would he do such a crazy fool thing for? Why, he even owns shares in the Moonbeam."

"Yeah?" sneered Red. "And what's it got him, the poor devil? Write-ups and interviews perhaps, but underneath is the sting of being cooped up with a bunch of people that can't abide the sight of him. Can't you see, you blind bat, that he's never on the in with them? Not on the poker, or pools, or their jokes, unless he butts in. And he feels it. You come along, and it's 'Hi, captain, join us,' and 'Come over with us and sit down, captain,' and so on. I swear, sometimes I am sorry for him, even if his grandfather did swap farms with my grandfather."

"Look at my hand," said David absently.

A broad purple stain spread across the palm.

"How did you get that?" asked Red.

"It's indelible lead. I must have spilled some leads out of my suitcase when I was turning over things to find that envelope. I was on my hands and knees, and must have pressed my hand down pretty hard. My palm was moist, and the darned thing spread the way it always does. Beastly stuff! It won't wash off."

"Mechanic's paste ought to fix it," said Red. "Where is the pencil?"

"Clipped to my lost notebook. 'Anyone returning plans may keep pencil, and no questions asked'," David said ruefully.

Things went badly all that day. The ship lagged along in a head wind, all five engines going at top speed, every engineer at his post. It was generally known, now, that David had no copy of the lost plans. So the thief could make the invention public under the name of an accomplice.

Mr. Hammond stayed in the chart room, watching the indicator as it ruthlessly registered the speed of the ship, the conviction growing steadily that they would never be able to beat the record of their great predecessor, the Graf Zeppelin.

David hovered over the wheel. He was sick

at heart. Little things bothered him. The blue stain on the palm of his hand annoyed him. The mechanic's paste had not worked very well.

After luncheon Mr. Hammond instituted another search for the missing plans, but in vain. Just one more night, and they would reach Los Angeles, and the plans would walk off for good. Mr. Hammond decided to search every man before he left the ship.

When afternoon tea was served, Dulcie coaxed David from the control room.

"You haven't spoken to me for days," she said.

"I'm rather upset, Dulcie," he replied, "and pretty poor company."

"You are always good company, Davie," she said, comfortingly. "Some good hot tea will pep you up. Cakes?"

David sipped his tea in silence.

"I wish you wouldn't worry," Dulcie said presently. "Dad thinks he can advertise it so the thief won't dare to use your plans at all."

"That won't work, Dulcie. You see, every scratch I had ever made on the subject was in that envelope, and it would only be my word against his."

"Couldn't Red swear he had seen it?"

"Yes, and then some pals of the thief could

swear that they had actually helped construct it."

"Dad's going to search every man as he gets off the ship at Los Angeles."

"What's to keep him from weighting it, and tossing it out of the ship some good place outside the city? He could easily go back for it."

"My word, David, what an awful thought!"

"I think the plans are gone for good, Dulcie, but if they are, I'm not going to crab over it. My luck holds yet. Nothing can ever take away from me the fact that I have been captain of the Moonbeam. I have learned a lot, and I have made some good friends."

"I come in there, Davie," said Dulcie decidedly.

David flushed, then looked at her squarely. "You are the best of all, Dulcie. The best little pal; the truest, squarest kid. All I hope is that you won't forget me when we get back to Ayre."

"Don't you worry," Dulcie said grimly. "You can't escape, poor dear! I'm a big, rough woman, Davie. Didn't you see daddy, all six-feet-three of him, trying to sneak off in the Moonbeam without me? What happened, I ask you?"

David laughed. "Gosh, you would have scared anyone."

"Well, then, have another cup of tea, to celebrate."

As he reached for the cup, Dulcie pointed to his palm. "What's that blue smudge?" she asked.

"Off an indelible pencil," David answered carelessly.

"Oh, won't it come off? Wally has one on his hand, too. He asked me what would take it off."

"Mechanic's paste takes some of it off," David replied.

Presently David went back to his cabin and lay down on the bunk. He had spent a sleepless night, and the day had been a hard and depressing one. He half dozed, but his subconscious mind worked busily on, and presently he seemed to hear Dulcie speak.

"Wally has one on his hand, too."

Wally! David lifted his hand and looked at the aniline stain spreading across the palm; the stain where he had rested his hand on the broken bit of indelible lead. There had been a splash of water on the floor. It must have softened the lead. Indelible pencils were always like that. Wally had a stain on his hand, too, did he?

David got up and, squaring his muscular shoulders, buttoned his coat. The action was

automatic—the gesture of a man buckling on armor. He went to the control room, gave a brief order, then went swiftly to Cram's door, knocked, and turned the knob. Wally was reading.

"Cram, you have never been up on the observer's platform, have you?" David asked smoothly.

"Oh, hello, Ellison," said Wally. "No, I've never been up in flight. I went up there back in Ayre before the Moonbeam was finished."

"It's a great sight over the ocean, especially now, at sunset. Come along, won't you? I'm going up for a minute. There's just time before dinner."

Wally hesitated, then rose with evident reluctance. "All right," he said. "I suppose I ought to be able to say I'd been up there in flight, but it's the last thing I'll care for, I bet."

He followed David into the hull, through devious ways up ladders and along narrow catwalks.

"This doesn't appeal to me," he growled when at last he crawled through the trap and emerged on the small platform on the dizzy top of the ship. The platform was surrounded by a strong wire railing, but it looked unstable to Wally, who tested it with his hand as David followed through the trap.

This platform is seldom used, except in war time. David stepped up and, slamming down the trap door, stood upon it and faced Wally. The last exotic colors of the Pacific sunset reddened the illimitable space in which they seemed to swing along—the two men cut off from all else living. David was silent.

"Well, I don't like it," Wally admitted after a moment. "Too darned much sky! You get a roll up here that you don't feel in the ship, too. And it's cold. Why isn't this railing higher? It isn't safe; just comes to my waist. So if you'll just step off that trap, Ellison, we'll go down."

"Not yet, Cram." David spoke quite gently. "I don't want you to miss any of this. We are riding high—higher every minute. I ordered the ship sent up a mile or so, and we are climbing fast.

"Imagine," he went on, "how easy it would be for a good husky chap, like me, for instance, to heave another chap over. He'd go bouncing down the side of the ship, clutching, but finding nothing to grab. Then—well, that would be about all. I wonder how long you would have to think, to remember, before you lost consciousness."

"Lord, what a morbid mind! You want to watch out for yourself," said Wally with a

forced laugh. The sunset shone full on his face. He was chalk white. A sickly fear was spreading through him. "Come on, Ellison, let's go down. Thanks for the view. I've had enough of it. Come on."

"No hurry," said David. He stood against the sunset. That or the fact that there was nothing to measure him by, no familiar scale of size, made his big muscular figure look gigantic to Wally's horrified gaze. For Wally was suddenly tasting a terror past his comprehension. The man was mad. Ellison was mad—mad—mad—mad. The words filled his brain like the beat of a drum.

"Come on, Davie, old chap, let's go down," he coaxed.

"No!" thundered David. He took a single step toward Wally across the little platform. With one hand he caught him by the lapels of his coat, and shook him gently.

Wally screamed.

"Stop that!" said David. He took up Wally's right hand and looked at it. He nodded at the purple stain he saw there. "Where is it?" he asked.

"Where's what?" chattered Wally.

"You know. The envelope—my plans."

"How do I know?" cried Wally shrilly. "You think I took them? Well, I didn't. What

would I want with your plans? Let go of me!" He pushed at David's hand. It was a grip of steel. "Let go, I tell you! I want to go down!"

"No," said David. "Where is the envelope, Cram? You know."

"I don't know anything about it, you fool!" cried Cram. "I'll fix you for this! Open that trap!"

"Where is the envelope with my papers? If I have to ask you that again, I'll fight you, Cram, right up here—"

"You mean you'll murder me!" Cram suddenly screamed. "Help! help!" His voice, thin and shattered, was torn to tatters by the wind and drifted into space. He suddenly slumped at David's feet, writhing.

Strangely, David's anger turned to pity. He pulled the cringing object upright. "Come, Cram," he said.

"I'll tell, I'll tell!" Cram screamed. "Let me down! The envelope is stuck under the bottom of the love birds' cage," he was panting. "In Trigg's room. I took it! Go look! It's there!"

"Is this the truth?" demanded David.

"I swear it," groaned Cram. "God's own truth!"

"You will have to pay for this, Cram," said

David, tightening his grasp on Cram's arm. "You will do just what I say. If you don't, I shall make you wish that you were dead." Anger rose in him again. "You poor thieving cur, you! I ought to—"

"Oh, don't, David, don't! I can't stand any more! I'll do anything you say, only take me down from this place."

David stooped, opened the trap, and still keeping a hand on his shoulder, shoved Wally down the ladder, along the catwalk, down the rear ladder into the passage that led into the cabins and the salon. The sound of voices came to them. Everyone was at dinner.

David pushed his prisoner into Doctor Trigg's room. The awakened love birds scolded softly as Cram felt under the floor of the cage. It stood on the table on four short brass legs. He fumbled a moment, then thrust something into David's hand. It was the missing envelope. David glanced inside. The papers were undisturbed.

"Come on," he said grimly.

He shoved Cram before him into the salon, and stopped. Everyone looked up. There was a silence. He held up the envelope, and at the same time pushed Cram forward.

"This man has something to say to you," he said.

CHAPTER XV

MORE SPEED

Cowering beside David, he got out the miserable confession at last. Bare facts that clothed themselves with sordid details in the minds of the listeners. Not a man spoke. Not a man could look at him. Searching each face, Walter Cram saw only the reflection of his own disgrace. He turned and bolted to the sanctuary of his cabin.

David, the precious envelope in his hand, turned to go; but in a moment the passengers surrounded him, shaking his hand, patting him on the back, congratulating him wholeheartedly.

One of the last to reach David was the youngest reporter. "Gosh, we are glad, captain! It sure was a rotten deal for you, and not so nice for the rest of us. Say, it is going to make a swell story!"

"Round up the other press men, will you, please?" David asked.

When they came, he said, "Boys, I know you will give me a square deal. I am going to ask a big favor of you. I don't want you to write a word about what has just happened. Not a single word."

"Aw, have a heart, captain! It's too good to kill," cried the star reporter.

"But you are going to kill it just the same," said David, smiling at the speaker. "I think you fellows are all good friends of mine. I think you will kill the story for my sake. And if you won't, why, please kill it for the sake of the Moonbeam. It's her maiden flight, you know, and it would be a crime to smear her all up with such a dirty scandal."

One of the men laughed. "Hear him! You'd think the ship was a girl. Well, Captain Ellison, it's all right as far as I go. I'll respect the unblemished reputation of your husky lady-love. How about it, boys?"

There was some grumbling, but finally David won their promise. The affair of the stolen plans would never get into print.

Cram did not appear nor would he eat, sending back untouched the tray the chef sent in. About ten o'clock Mr. Hammond went to Cram's room. It was two hours before he came out and called David.

"Well, David, I guess this unfortunate af-

fair is nearly finished. I wish I could forget it. I made Cram talk to me. He acknowledged that he had it in for you, but his reasons were so vague that I couldn't make anything out of them. However, it's done. I am sorry for him, but he's got to be wiped off our slate. So I've bought him out; taken over his shares in the Moonbeam. I gave him a check, and made him sign receipts for everything. He is going to leave us at Los Angeles."

"Thank Heaven for that!" said David devoutly. "I simply can't bear to see him. I want a chance to forget, too."

The remainder of that night was stormy, and David made it an excuse for remaining at the wheel or around the control room most of the time. With the first glimpse of the California coast line the next morning, as they came down toward San Francisco, the weather changed into a sparkle and dazzle of sunshine and balmy breezes. They were flying low past the city, its hundreds of slips and piers stretching out into the bay like a fringe. The usual civic greeting met them. Flags broke out, whistles tooted, sirens moaned, and bells rang. Numbers of planes buzzed about them like flies, their engines roaring out the general spirit of welcome.

David sent for Red.

"After we have landed at Los Angeles, I want you to go with me to see if we can't get the accelerators made up. I know they can be done, but we may have to oversee the job pretty closely."

"Sure, we will do that. It won't take long. There is nothing that would require a mould or special machinery."

"If we get them made," said David, "we will adjust them to the engines without telling anyone but the engineers. There can be no harm in trying them. We are only two hours ahead of the time of the G. Z., and a run of bad weather would make us lose every bit of that."

"We won't lose that, if we have to get out and push," declared Red.

When Los Angeles opened her arms to them at twelve-twenty, noon, many things happened. The first one off the ship was Walter Cram. He swung himself down almost before the steps were adjusted and, like a shadow, slipped into the cheering crowd. Only Dulcie saw him go. From her window she watched the slim figure hurrying away like a fugitive.

"Good-bye, Wally," she whispered.

It was his only farewell.

As soon as official greetings had been extended to Commander Hammond and the offi-

cers, David and Red taxied into the city, the precious plans in David's pocket.

Red unfolded a telegraph blank.

"See what they handed me back there. It's a night letter from the Padre. Whatever do you suppose he is up to? He says, 'Am meeting you at landing field Lakehurst stop most important business stop arrange to spend a day with me stop mother is fine.' Thank God he added that! I'd have thought he had bad news. Here's what I'll answer. 'Can't promise as present plan is to take ship back to Ayre immediately. Radio nature of important business.' That ought to get something out of him."

Red sent his message from the first Western Union office they passed. Then in the delightful excitement of machine shops that smelled of oil and steel he forgot all about it.

At one-thirty the officers and passengers were hurried off to a civic luncheon, and thence to a meeting of the Pioneer Daughters of California. But David side-stepped the Daughters, and dashed off to see how the accelerators were coming along under the eagle eye of Red Ryan.

He had only time to give a few words of advice, then rushed away to a reception at the Aviation Club. He begged off from the Board

of Commerce meeting which came next, and went to the machine shop again. Red had not left since the work started, and David made him go out for a sandwich. At five the shop closed, and David and Red drove back to their hotel, where they put the envelope in the safe.

David dressed for the dinner given by the mayor and council. Four hundred sat down; and for the honor guests, the favors were fountain pens, with cases of California gold. Later they had boxes at a popular show. Still later, when David finally reached his room, he found Red sprawled out in a big chair.

"My dog, boy, do you know what time it is?" demanded David.

"That and more," said Red, yawning. "I just got in. What's on for tomorrow?"

"Nothing much but the accelerators. I simply can't trail around with Mr. Hammond all day tomorrow. Here's a list of activities: The poor man is going to speak before the Board of Trade, the Elks, the Rotary Club, the K. of C., Kiwanis, Masons, and the United Churches of Los Angeles. Also there is a luncheon given by the Sons of the Forty-niners, and a dinner."

"All I can say is, Miss Dulcie is headed toward an orphans' home. The Big Fella can't stand it."

"Neither can we, if we don't sleep. Go to bed, you loafer, if you want to go to the machine shop with me at eight o'clock, sharp!"

On Thursday morning, local committees discovered that the eminent professors, Doctors Trigg and Sims, had by some dastardly stroke of fate never seen Los Angeles! As soon as Dulcie appeared, they were all three bundled into a big limousine, with an enthusiastic native Californian whom Doctor Sims caustically referred to afterwards as "our barker".

Mr. Hammond worked his way grimly through speeches and interviews, and the others accomplished great feats of sightseeing. But at last the day ended and as soon as they could escape from their hosts, they retired.

When Mr. Hammond, after a restless night, reached the hangar Friday morning, he found David and Red there before him, looking fresh and crisp. Both were in overalls.

Mr. Hammond frankly acknowledged to the boys his disappointment in the performance of the ship during the trip over Siberia and the Pacific. "I was sure we'd pick up speed, but those head winds have made us lose our chance to make the record I wanted," he said gloomily. "She just can't do it."

"We could gain a little by setting a straight course, instead of flying over so many cities," David suggested.

"It's not good policy," said Mr. Hammond. "Those big cities want to see the ship, and really it is their right to do so. No, we will make as good time as we can on our predetermined course." He walked aft.

"Gee, the Big Fella's low!" said Red, looking after him. "But only a few hours more, and we will be ready for him. They promised to deliver those screws by nine-thirty. It won't take half an hour then to finish installing them. Look here, don't you mean to tell the chief at all?"

"Not until we hang over Lakehurst; and not then, if it's a flop."

"Come and get a sody while we wait," suggested Red. "You are nervous."

"Why wouldn't I be?" demanded David.

The passengers commenced to wander back; the crew gathered, and went to their places; the usual dense crowd blackened the landing field. Dulcie, still tired, had the peaceful sensation of returning home. Her father, for the first time since the ship started from Lakehurst, showed a strain. It hurt him to lose the distinction of making a record, but he had definitely given up the hope of doing

so. David's seeming unconcern hurt him a little, but he supposed David was too young to take such things much to heart.

The ship took off without accident, the ground crew working with the smooth accuracy of a machine. It was eleven twenty-five of Friday, July second. They started eastward through the crystalline, clean air of California—air which always carries its own celestial aroma; a perfume, vague and delicate, made of millions of flowers, seas of fruit, leagues of pines, all washed with the faint breath of the sea.

"In point of fact," said Doctor Sims, judicially, "the enthusiasm of the Californian seems perfectly justifiable. I was rather annoyed at first by what I thought was the bombastic attitude of our barker. But the young man, while enthusiastic, was really quite moderate in his statements."

"Decidedly," agreed Doctor Trigg. "I was recently offered a chair at Leland Stanford University. I hesitated to accept it, but I believe it would be a fine place for an old man to finish his career."

"Gr-r-r-r-r-uh!" said Doctor Sims in his worst growl. "Wild goose chase, I'd call it! Perfect nonsense! At your age, crazy! New climate, new type of students. How do you

know how it would affect your lumbago? Silly, plain silly!"

"Possibly! Possibly!" Doctor Trigg agreed.

Dulcie was looking out of the window. "Aren't we going rather fast?" she queried, as a couple of the reporters came up.

"We are," said the younger. "We just looked at the indicator thing, and we are buzzing along at a great rate."

"I must go and see," said Dulcie, hurrying into the control room, where David held the wheel.

"What are we making, Davie?"

David beamed. "Ninety miles an hour!"

"Why, David!" Dulcie studied him curiously. "Isn't that pretty fast for us?"

"Pretty good clip," said David carelessly.

"Does daddy know?"

"I don't believe so," said David. "He hasn't been around for quite a while."

"Well, he ought to know," declared daddy's own child.

She went off, and almost immediately Mr. Hammond appeared. He said nothing, but went to the indicator and studied it. "What's wrong with this indicator?" he asked finally. "We never make that speed."

"It has held that, according to the chart, ever since we left Los Angeles," said David.

There was a tremor in his voice, that he could scarcely control. "If it only works, if it only works!" his heart kept whispering.

"If it only works!" he said when Red came forward to look at the indicator.

Red gave him a look of disgust.

"If it works! Why, it is working, you dumb-bell! Ninety! Has the commander seen it? Well, when are you going to tell him?"

"When we reach Lakehurst," said David. "I want to work it out. It is only fair to me to do that."

"It's your funeral," sighed Red, "and I'll not say a word, but my, wouldn't I enjoy it just to break the glad news to him!"

From then on the dial gradually grew to be the center of a group of amazed and delighted officers. It climbed to ninety-one, wavered, went to ninety-three, ninety-four and steadied at ninety-five miles an hour.

David called down to the five eggs by telephone, and the engineers declared that the engines were working as usual, with no extra expenditure of gas.

Before Saturday dawned they were rushing over Texas. Soon El Paso was beneath them, then she faded away. At twelve-thirty, Kansas City, secure on the border line of two states, greeted them with bells, whistles and

bombs. Then the yelling crowds, standing on roofs and blocking thoroughfares, and the inevitable escort of flitting planes, were behind them. At seven that evening, going ninety-eight miles an hour, they passed Chicago, the city roaring back at their roaring engines.

At eleven Detroit appeared, her forests of chimneys belching flames of greeting, while hundreds of brazen factory whistles screeched their welcome.

No one on the ship thought of bed. The passengers, crowded into the salon, watched the calm starlit night, listened to the thunder of the engines, and talked. At twelve the myriad lights of Cleveland appeared, crossed and recrossed below them, like chains of diamonds and fire opals. Searchlights caught and held them, a dozen airplanes darted up and played about them. Then the calm and the darkness again.

"Beautiful! Beautiful!" said Doctor Trigg, as he watched the twinkling light-jewels disappear, and the planes turn back.

"Um!" said Doctor Sims. "Trigg, I can't just see the advisability of this Leland Stanford affair. Is the salary larger?"

"Why, I'd forgotten it," said Doctor Trigg. "Yes, they pay very generously."

"So does Princeton," said Doctor Sims, loyally.

"Of course; of course! Well, I haven't made up my mind."

"Well, I can't advise for it," repeated Doctor Sims. He cleared his throat, and said rather forlornly, "Fact is, Trigg, I'd miss you. I—I—actually can't see it, Trigg."

Doctor Trigg turned and regarded the gnarled and puckered old face. To him it looked a fine and open countenance, sincere and true. He patted the thin shoulder.

"Old friend," he said, "if I go, you go. Did you think for a minute that I could leave my old friend after forty years? No, no! I couldn't get along without you."

Doctor Sims groped for the other's hand, and shook it hard. A look of relief filled his face.

"Hah—gr-r-r-r-rumph!" he said.

"Exactly!" said Martin Trigg.

CHAPTER XVI

PARTNERS

At two A. M. they were over Ayre, Ohio. The lateness of the hour made no difference in their welcome. Apparently all the able-bodied persons in the city had decided to make a night of it, and most of them had come out to the landing field to greet the silver ship. Big searchlights and hundreds of flares surrounded the field. The mast wore a crown of colored lights. Just as they reached the field, all lights were extinguished long enough to display the words "Welcome, Moonbeam" laid out on the ground in electric letters six feet in height.

They flew so low that the watching throngs could see the passengers waving. The engines were stopped, and they hung for a minute in the white glare. They could hear, as once before, the crowd roaring a greeting to their own ship. "Moonbeam! Moonbeam!" rose the cry. Then darkness swallowed them again.

"David," said Red, "you just gotta tell Mr. Hammond."

"I don't see it," said David, stubbornly. "Think what a surprise it will be for him when we reach Lakehurst. We are bound to make the record he wants. I want you to tune her up to a hundred miles now."

Red leaned against the bench, twirling the screw on his wrench.

"Look, David, if you do that, he'll think you've held out on him. I would in his place. He knows all about the accelerator. Don't you think he naturally wants to try it out, too? After all, Dave, he's the chief—the commander of this ship, and he's treated you darned white."

"You are right, of course," said David after a long pause, reluctantly. "I sort of wanted to make him a present of the record at Lakehurst, but you are right."

"He's in the salon," said Red. "I'll get him."

As Mr. Hammond came into the control room, he stopped to look at the indicator.

"At this rate," he said hopefully, "we will make our record after all. Did you want to see me, David?"

"If Van Arden will take the wheel, I'd like to ask you to come to my room; or perhaps you want to turn in now, sir?"

"Turn in!" exclaimed the chief. "With those engines picking up like this, and cities to greet every little while—our last night, and all? Good Lord, no! Never was so wide-awake in my life."

"We feel like that too," said David.

Calling Van Arden, the three went to David's stateroom.

"All right, David," said Mr. Hammond, lighting a cigar.

"Shoot!" said Red firmly.

"Well, commander, when we recovered the plans, Red and I decided to have a set of the accelerators constructed in Los Angeles, and try them out as we crossed the States. They couldn't do any harm, and—"

Mr. Hammond waved away details.

"You mean they are on the engines now?" he demanded. "Is that why we are making such good time?"

"I hope so," said David.

"You know so, you nut," said Red, angrily.

Mr. Hammond's cigar went out.

"So your accelerator is actually a success. I thought those plans looked pretty practical. Can we continue the present speed, do you think?"

"Yes, sir, and Red is going now to speed the adjustment up to a hundred miles an hour."

"Go ahead, Red," laughed Mr. Hammond, rubbing his hands delightedly. "Don't let me keep you!"

After Red had gone, opening his wrench with the pleased air of a man sharpening a carving knife for a particularly juicy-looking turkey, Mr. Hammond turned to David.

"Well, son, you have certainly won your spurs. By the way you have handled the ship, and now by making the record I wanted so much."

"We aren't there yet," said David cautiously.

"You are Scotch, aren't you?" laughed Mr. Hammond. "I congratulate you, David, with all my heart. It is wonderful, absolutely wonderful! I'm as proud of you as though you were my own boy. Where are those specifications? I want to look them over again. David, I'm certainly delighted." He shook hands heartily, as David, with a light heart, handed him the envelope.

Red joined David in the control room later. He was laughing.

"Confess now, David, that it would have been a black deal to leave the Big Fella out in the dark any longer. I met him just now. He's crazy glad. The engineers are havin' a celebration, too. In every egg they are all

leanin' over their engines, oiling and wiping and testing, for fear she might slow down. And they are all remindin' each other that they are personal friends of the famous Captain Ellison of the good ship Moonbeam. This must be Newcastle coming," he added, dodging David's left. "It is three o'clock."

As they passed over, Mr. Hammond came in and peered at the indicator.

"She's making one hundred and ten miles!" he said shakily.

"It's all right, sir," laughed David.

"Come to my room; I want to talk to you."

He closed the door, and motioned David to a seat.

"I've been figuring this thing out, and I want to make you an offer. I have made out a rough agreement for you to sign unless, of course, you want to consult a lawyer."

"I'll say not, sir," said David decidedly.

"Here's my idea, then. See how you like it. You will take the invention and enter it in the school contest, but with 'patents pending' all over it. The prize money to be yours. But before that—now, in fact, I will buy a half interest in it. I bought back Cram's shares in the Moonbeam, you know, and I will make over those shares to you, in payment. As for the royalties, we will go fifty-fifty. One other

matter—" he hesitated. "I'd like to share in this in another way, David. It's sort of kiddish, perhaps, but I'd like to see my name —I'd like to announce it as the Ellison-Hammond Accelerator."

David took a deep breath.

"Hammond-Ellison, and you are too generous, sir." He held out his hand, and they shook solemnly.

"Good!" said Mr. Hammond. He laughed and pointed to the paper. "Sign on the dotted line," he quoted, "but think it over first. And now let's see if Ryan has juggled us up any faster."

The Moonbeam was holding steadily at one hundred and ten, and David wanted to talk to Red. Search discovered him in his quarters, playing with the kitten. He jumped up, letting Trouble slide down his leg.

"Anything up?" he demanded.

"Nothing at all. That is, there's a lot," David stuttered.

Red took a step toward the door.

"Oh, cool off, the ship's all right. Sit down." David repeated his conversation with Mr. Hammond, and added, "Now, Red, old dear, that goes. But with one big IF. If you and I go fifty-fifty on the prize money, and fifty-fifty on my share of the royalties. If you

will agree to that I will make the deal with the commander."

"No," said Red promptly.

"Yes," said David.

"No, I tell you! What an idea! He invents a wonderful contraption. It's a great success; so he hands out half the royalties to somebody, mind you," Red declared scornfully, "who has just stood around and admired."

"You have helped me all along," declared David. "I couldn't have done half so well without you. Honest, Red, you have got to do it."

"God bless you for a generous imbecile, but I won't do it. Come on down, if you won't let a poor working man get an hour's sleep."

"You have got to go halves with me," David persisted doggedly. "Say you will, and you can go to bed for a couple of hours."

"Then I sit up," said Red. "Tell you what, David! Here's what you can do, and it will mean a lot more than money to me. You can see to it that I get a job with you. I like you, boy, and we hit it off. Let's stick together. Huh?"

"Surest thing in the world! But the other goes, too."

"No," said Red.

"Oh Lord!" groaned David.

Still arguing, they went down to the passenger gondola. Bellefontaine was below them, and it was half-past four.

By eight-thirty Sunday morning they were over New York City. The ship was all excitement. The passengers looked down with awe at the majestic city, at its soaring towers and deep canyons, at its embracing rivers running to the sea, where the ships of all the world come laden to the wharves. The sun blazed on gilded domes and delicate spires, Liberty lifted her steadfast torch, and the Moonbeam turned her proud form toward Lakehurst.

In the control room the operator met Red with a radiogram.

"From the Padre, I suppose. Do you know, he never answered that telegram I sent him from Los Angeles?" Red commented, opening the message. He read the words over and over, as though disbelieving his eyes.

"Well," he said at last, "the thing that just couldn't happen has happened. Read it!"

David took the paper. It read:

"Insist on seeing you at Lakehurst stop most important stop grandfather's farm has let loose with two gushers best grade oil stop worth millions."

"Why, that's immense!" cried David.

"Yes, it's the grand news," said Red. "That farm! It wouldn't grow anything but tarantulas and scorpions and prairie dogs. Two gushers! Now mother, God bless her, can have all her heart desires, and the Padre can build himself a whole row of hospitals for his poor. Ain't it grand, David? I'm askin' you!"

"It's the finest thing I ever heard. But what will you do?"

"Stick to me engines," said Red, "forever and ever. And pray that Old Foolish here will now stop tantalizin' me about royalties."

As they walked back through the salon, they found the radio man talking to the youngest reporter, who stepped up.

"What's this, Mr. Ryan? I guess you have a story for me, haven't you?"

"Not any," said Ryan.

"Oh, sure you have—that message."

Red laughed. "Well, it's luck I came along, if it's this you mean." He pulled the paper from his pocket. "From my brother," he explained. "He uses a code. Decoded, it means that he wants me to go with him in New York to buy some B. V. D's, and let's see—Oh, some socks! And he wants 'em to look like a million dollars. It is a good code. You'd never guess it, would you?"

Unbelief was stamped on the two faces.

"Where is your home, Mr. Ryan?" asked the reporter.

Red grinned at the trap. "Ayre," he said.

"But when you are not in the air," persisted the reporter. Red sauntered toward the passage. "I'm never anywhere else," he said over his shoulder.

Mr. Hammond came in from the control room. "Almost there!" he said. "I have almost worn that indicator out, looking at it. But I know we have made the grade."

"We all congratulate you, Mr. Hammond," said Doctor Trigg.

"We do indeed," added Doctor Sims.

"I have already been approached by Parker's Magazine for an article on this journey," said Doctor Trigg. "I should like you to peruse the manuscript before I send it to them. I want to publish it with your personal approval."

"And I," said Doctor Sims, "am about to finish a valuable monograph on 'Epitaphs of the World, Past and Present,' a book which contains the fruit of twenty years of search and selection. I should like to dedicate it, with an appropriately commendatory inscription, to your daughter."

"To me?" cried Dulcie, flinging her arms around Doctor Sims in a quick hug. "How splendid! Won't the girls at college be green with envy?"

Doctor Sims looked at her. "My dear," he said, "you are kind to accept it. It is all an old man who loves you has to offer. To write an appropriate book for you would tax Orpheus and put Sappho to shame."

"You are very kind, doctor," Mr. Hammond replied; then turning to Dulcie, "My dear, I want you to pick yourself out a nice little roadster in New York."

"Isn't daddy a dear?" asked Dulcie of the world at large.

"You have earned it," said Mr. Hammond, and went into the control room to gloat once more over the speed indicator.

Doctor Trigg led Dulcie over to a window. "I want to add a word, dear child," he said. "I want to thank you for what you have done for two old men. You have shared your youth and freshness with us. You have opened the portal into a new world, for Sims and for me. You have unlocked a door leading into the secret place of my heart. I had thought that it was full of ashes, but I find that it is still peopled by loving and lovely ghosts, who are glad to accept me again."

"Oh, dear Doctor Trigg," murmured Dulcie, squeezing his arm.

A shout from Mr. Hammond interrupted them, attracting the attention of everyone.

"Lakehurst in sight," he cried. "Around the world in nineteen days, and eight hours! Ahead of the flying time of the Graf Zeppelin, and in a much larger ship."

The reporters cheered lustily. Everyone rushed to shake the commander's hand. Dulcie, with Koko under her arm, went and stood by David at the wheel.

"We will soon be there, Captain Ellison."

"Yes indeed, Miss Hammond," he answered, smiling.

"Look down, David. The place is black with people. Aren't there acres of cars over there?"

"Many more than when we left," said David. "A terrible mob. It would be, you know. It is the Fourth of July, and the world and his wife and the kiddies are here to see us finish the cruise. Just look at them! I hope they can keep the field clear. Take this glass. See the flags, and the mobs on the buildings outside the field. Enthusiasm! Why, they're crazy! What they won't do to us!"

"It scares me somehow," said Dulcie. "I'd like to stay right here."

"Well, the first flight of the silver ship is ended," David mused, as he guided his ship over the field. "I wonder what her next will be. So many things have happened."

"The Moonbeam has brought you fame and fortune, hasn't she, David?"

David did not answer. The great ship hovered above the field, then slowly sank, the landing crew in full formation beneath her. Down and down, slowly, gracefully until her ropes were seized by eager, practiced hands.

"She's brought me something better than fame and fortune;" said David, suddenly, answering Dulcie's question. "Hammond-Ellison: partners. Does that stand, Dulcie?"

Her eyes met his.

"It certainly stands," she said.